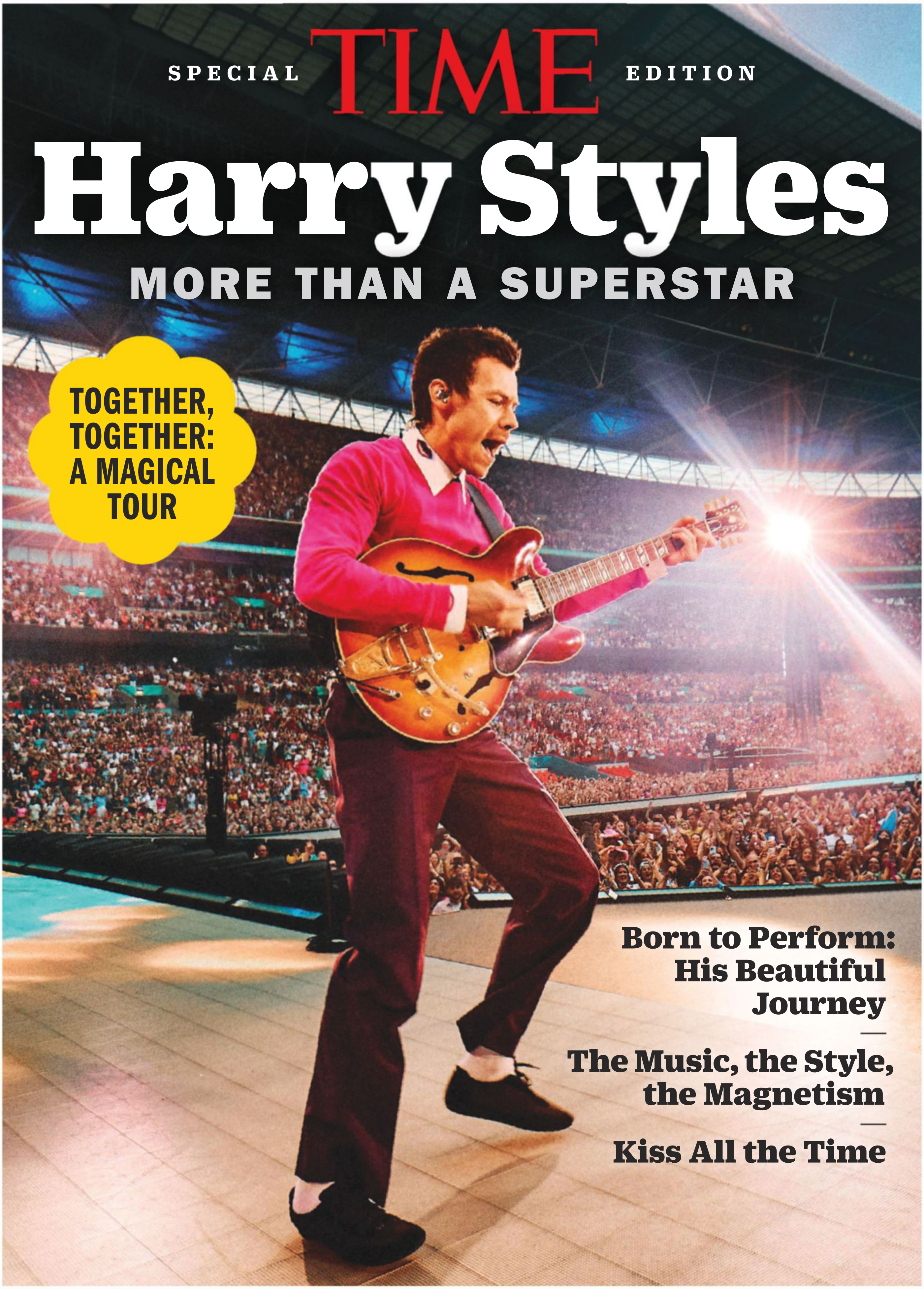
SPECIAL TIME EDITION

Harry Styles

MORE THAN A SUPERSTAR



TOGETHER, TOGETHER: A MAGICAL TOUR

Born to Perform: His Beautiful Journey

The Music, the Style, the Magnetism

Kiss All the Time

SPECIAL TIME EDITION

Harry Styles

Venice International Film Festival, 2022.

CONTENTS

4 Wild About Harry

CENTER STAGE

12 Pure Magnetism
30 Dress for Success
37 The Harry Who Styles Harry Styles
38 Illustrated Man

BORN TO PERFORM

42 The Charmer from Cheshire
48 Parental Guidance
52 Going in One Direction
59 Clip Bait
64 One Direction's Best Songs
66 Another British Invasion?
70 The Boy Band Blueprint

STEPPIN' OUT

76 Going It Alone
81 Let's Rock: *Harry Styles*
82 An Era Gone Too Soon: *Fine Line*
86 Harry Goes Hollywood
90 Inside *Harry's House*
92 Joy on Vinyl: *Kiss All the Time. Disco Occasionally.*

At the 2022 Toronto International Film Festival for the premiere of **My Policeman.**

tiff
VOGUE

WILD ABOUT HARRY

With his Together, Together tour underway and new album *Kiss All the Time. Disco, Occasionally.* racking up sales, Harry Styles is continuing his accessible, unconventional charm offensive across the globe.

BY EILEEN DASPIN

IT WASN'T YOUR TYPICAL STEVE KORNACKI breaking news coverage. On January 22, 2026, NBC's tireless political journalist, known for his analysis of polls and election results, appeared in a five-minute video on social media to address a situation he said had been generating "a lot of chatter." Kornacki stood before a map of the world, and as it began to light up, he made sweeping arm gestures across it, election-night style, and identified what all the excitement was about: After a three-year absence from the stage, Harry Styles was returning for a seven-city tour called Together, Together.

Prerecorded with the help of Styles' team, the video was posted to the pop star's Instagram and YouTube accounts, with the correspondent appearing that evening on *NBC Nightly News* and the following morning on the *Today* show to discuss presales, general sales, and the news calories of the new tour. Given Styles' 46 million followers on Insta and 15 million-plus subscribers on YouTube, the Kornacki clip naturally went viral, and the segment earned the entertainer a new fan. Asked if he would be attending one of the Madison Square Garden shows, Kornacki joked about his compensation. "They told me 5 percent off tickets now. I'd love to go. Hopefully I can get in there for one of those [shows]."

There aren't many musical artists who could pull off a Kornacki news collab, but there's also only one Harry Styles: a gender-bending male pop star who favors lace, ruffles, and pearls, rolls his eyes at traditional boy-girl rules, and cultivates gentleness over swagger and politeness over aggression. A Styles concert can feel more like a segment of Oprah (albeit one with a live audience of tens of thousands) than a music event, thanks to the entertainer's habit of answering fan questions scrawled on signs—"Should I text him?" "Should I dump him?"—and his exhortations to "treat people with kindness" and "get home safely." With each new album, Styles has both grown and switched musical directions, and even his video performances defy pigeonholing. Check out

Styles did a 12-night residency at London's Wembley Stadium in June 2026.

Rocking Wembley Stadium in June 2026. Opposite: Political journalist Steve Kornacki helped announce the launch of the Together, Together tour with a specially taped video that was posted to social media.

"Dance No More," released in March 2026, in which the 32-year-old shimmies around a high school gym in short shorts and a regimental tie, like a cross between Magic Mike and Ferris Bueller. Which is the real Styles? Possibly both. Whether this fluid you-don't-own-me act is 100 percent authentic or an exercise in staying on brand is hard to know, but Styles certainly presents as genuine, and the public buy-in is undeniable. All of his studio projects have debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200. His last road show, 2021 to 2023's Love on Tour, was one of the biggest of the decade; and in five years, his gender-neutral beauty brand, Pleasing, has grown into an estimated $16 million enterprise selling nail polish, posh fragrances, apparel, and even sexual wellness products.

Part of Styles' appeal is legacy. He stepped onto the world stage as a solo artist in 2017 with a built-in fan base from his days as an adorable, unfiltered 16-year-old goofing around with his One Direction mates in *The X Factor* house stairwell. Though Styles no longer shares such unguarded moments, he's carried the persona forward, aligning with the

2026
BREAKING NEWS
HARRY STYLES ANNOUNCES WORLD TOUR
BREAKING NEWS • HARRY STYLES ANNOUNCES WORLD TOUR: TO

approach of pop stars including Billie Eilish, who has talked about anxiety and body image; Selena Gomez, who is known for discussing her mental health; and Ed Sheeran, who often emphasizes his regular-guy-who-writes-songs identity. Styles has also won goodwill from critics for his charisma, for his respect for fans, and for taking his solo career relatively slow, choosing smaller arenas for early performances rather than booking giant stadium tours.

To be sure, Styles is no longer just the kid from the English town of Holmes Chapel, and there's been some backlash as he set out to promote *Kiss All the Time*. Some fans were unhappy about exorbitant ticket prices for Together, Together (which can run upwards of $1,000 for seats to the Madison Square Garden residency). Others have been quick to label the 50-show concert tour Styles' "flop era." There have been complaints about the singer's outfits—which have been described as insufficiently flamboyant—the absence of One Direction songs on the setlist, and obstructed views in some venues. (Styles quickly had the stage set changed.) In February, not long after Styles announced the tour, he took flack for comments he made about relaxing in Italy. Read one viral tweet: "…you are privileged to sit down and sip your coffee in comfort somewhere in italy because you are a wealthy man, not because you're in italy. dumbass."

MUCH OF THIS IS ONLINE NOISE, THE INTERNET doing the internet—the rule being that when someone is on top, he must be knocked down. Plus, as we know, algorithms give more traction to the negative, so a video captioned "Harry's new tour is awful" will get more traction than "Harry's new tour was a blast," as it invites more engagement. The best way to gauge what people think is to look at consumer behavior. To wit: In January, when presales to Styles' 30-day MSG residency were announced, 11.5 million people signed up. On the other side of the pond, an economist projected that Styles' 12-night run at London's Wembley Stadium would generate more than a billion British pounds in consumer spend, surpassing both Oasis Live '25 and Taylor Swift's Eras Tour. Two months later, *Kiss All the Time* topped the Billboard 200 and the U.K. charts, selling 1 million units globally, the biggest debut of any album at that point in 2026. In May, when Styles launched Together, Together in Amsterdam, all he had to do was sip water between songs and the reaction was as if "he'd done something miraculous with loaves and fishes," wrote Alexis Petridis in *The Guardian*, noting that the crowd greeted songs from *Kiss All the Time* "with a fervour indistinguishable from their response to his biggest hits."

BACK IN THE ONE DIRECTION DAYS, IT WOULD have been hard to predict that Harry Styles was going to be the group's breakout solo artist. In those early stairwell vlogs, in which the boy band answered fan questions and goofed about with one another, Styles was playful, with a disarming smile already in place, but he wasn't exactly dazzling. Some of his answers to fan questions fell fairly flat. When asked what he looked for in a girl, Styles' comment—"I like girls who have a nice, pretty face"—elicited groans from his bandmates.

Even when One Direction went "on hiatus" in 2016, a year and a half after Zayn Malik announced his intention to go solo, the field was genuinely open—it could have as easily been Malik as Styles, or Niall Horan as Louis Tomlinson or Liam Payne. Malik got off to a strong start with a one-two punch, releasing 2016's "Pillowtalk," which debuted at No. 1 in the U.S., and following it with the massive global hit "Dusk Till Dawn" in September 2017. But the conversation changed with Harry's first single, "Sign of the Times," off his self-titled 2017 debut album, a five-minute-plus rock ballad that evoked classic rock (David Bowie, Queen, Pink Floyd). Critics interpreted the song as a declaration of serious ambition rather than boy-band grad business as usual. "Yep, *Harry Styles* is that rare generation-spanning, forward-thinking retro album, one that nods to the past without garishly repeating it," raved *Variety.*

With the release of *Harry Styles*, the singer leaned into accessibility. On the first leg of his tour, he intentionally booked theaters and small venues, such as the 3,500-seat Wang Theatre in Boston, so that One Direction fans who had previously only seen the performer in 60,000-plus seat stadiums got an up-close-and-personal experience. Exhibiting his trademark cheek, Styles stuck out his tongue at fans and spritzed the crowd with water; he also ran around the stage with a rainbow-pride flag, touched the hands of those in the front row, and encouraged audience participation by including One Direction tunes "Story of My Life" and "What Makes You Beautiful," the band's first single. Speaking to concertgoers, he sounded like the best personal cheerleader ever: "Your job," he said, "is to do whatever makes you happiest in the world. Do whatever you want. Be whoever you want to be." The audience dug it, and Styles was off and running.

How fans relate to their pop idols has morphed dramatically in recent decades thanks to the internet. In the past, entertainers such as Madonna, Prince, and Bowie were admired partly because they seemed mysterious and larger than life. If a fan felt they knew those singers, it was through interviews in magazines or on television and relating to lyrics. Today, a "Styler" or a "Harrie" who has watched hundreds of clips of their idol joking with concertgoers, interacting with fans, and sharing unscripted moments for more than a decade, feels the link more personally. Styles has intensified the so-called parasocial phenomenon during concerts, where he often ignores the cost-effective format of same setlist, same artist spiel, same optimized length. Instead, he likes to improvise, playing a song such as "Medicine," which has never been released on an album, and interacting with audience members ad hoc.

Growing up in Holmes Chapel, Styles famously worked at a bakery, and years later, his boss described him as "the most polite member of staff we've ever had," one who had a special way with customers. Today, watching Styles during a performance, it's clear that special touch is intact—particularly in the moments when he helps a fan come out to a loved one. The exchanges often go as they did at a sold-out show on his Love on Tour show in 2021, at the Fiserv Forum in Milwaukee. From the proscenium, Styles spotted McKinley McConnell, a young woman close to the stage with a sign that read, "My mom is in Section 201. Help me come out." As he turned the microphone toward her, asking what she wanted to say, the audience heard him follow up with, "Do you want me to tell her? I can tell her. Yeah, no problem, one second." Styles then returned to the center of the stage and shouted, "Lisa, she's gay!" as cheers filled the 17,000-person arena.

Not your typical breaking news coverage. Not your typical pop star. Not your typical anyone. Praise Harry. ▯

With the Jules Buckley Orchestra in London, June 2026. Opposite: Styles and Zoë Kravitz are reportedly engaged.

Together, Together tour, Wembley Stadium, 2026.

CENTER STAGE

From his earliest days in the spotlight, Harry Styles has been a self-assured and magnetic performer. Since going solo, he has redefined what it means to be a modern pop star.

PURE MAGNETISM

His concerts are joyful, his music emotionally vulnerable, and he's partial to jumpsuits, dresses, and pearls. How Harry Styles has redrawn the blueprint for music stardom.

BY KAYTI BURT

When 16-year-old Harry Styles stepped onto the *X-Factor* stage in 2010 and belted out an a capella version of Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely," no one could have predicted the meteoric trajectory his career would take. Following a record-breaking run as one-fifth of the boy band One Direction, Styles would go on to become one of the most recognizable personalities on the planet. In a hyper-competitive global music industry, he's done this not by cultivating a macho, bravado-driven persona but by leaning into emotional vulnerability, unconventional fashion, and an onstage authenticity that inspires others to live their own truth. The winning combination has garnered him fans from across age ranges, nationalities, and genders. Sixteen years into his musical career and nine years into his solo era, the 32-year-old Styles has solidified his reign as a new kind of modern pop star.

HARRY'S X FACTOR

Styles' unique pop persona has become more pronounced as a solo artist, but the elements that make him a disarming cultural force have always been there. During his *X Factor* audition, Styles, seemingly unfazed by the bright lights and rowdy audience, cheekily told Simon Cowell and the other judges about the cakes he sold during

At the 2021 Grammys, Styles won best pop solo performancefor "Watermelon Sugar."

his Saturday shifts at a small-town bakery. In a pre-audition interview, he spoke about how winning a "battle of the bands" with his high school mates had solidified his dream to become a performer. "Playing to that many people really showed me that's what I wanted to do," he said. "I got such a thrill when I was in front of people, singing. It made me want to do it more and more."

Marina Tiwold, a 23-year-old fan from Pittsburgh, started stanning Harry Styles as an 8-year-old Directioner during the *X-Factor* era. "Obviously, I was very young, but I remember him having this charisma about him that drew me in," she says. Styles' charm didn't just shine on stage; it also translated to the small-screen vlogs that gave fans behind-the-scenes looks into the lives of the

One Direction appeared on the Today *show four times between 2012 (shown here) and 2014.*

One Direction members. "Watching all of the diaries and other videos they put out was also a big part of me being interested in the band. I loved watching their interactions and how silly they could be," Tiwold says. The vlogs created a parasocial bond between the band members and their fans that, for many, would continue well past the breakup of One Direction in 2016.

Like quite a few Styles enthusiasts, Tiwold is drawn to the playful yet persistent way the singer prioritizes authenticity. "The obvious thing that sets him apart has been his willingness to break societal and gender norms," she says. "The thing about Harry is that he's just Harry, and he does what Harry wants to do, not what society tells him he should do."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

> “WHEN YOU WAKE UP EVERY DAY, YOU HAVE THE CHANCE TO THINK WHAT YOU WANT TO PUT IN THE WORLD THAT DAY... BE A LOVER. CHOOSE LOVE. GIVE LOVE.”

At the Jingle Ball in Dallas in 2015.

At Madison Square Garden, 2022.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

SUBVERSIVE STYLES

Over the years, Styles' expectation-agnostic attitude has looked like many things, but it has most visibly included gender-flipping fashion choices. Styles has stepped onto the red carpet, stage, and photography set in floral suits, saloon dresses, and rainbow jumpsuits. He casually wears pearls and nail polish, helping to normalize fluidity and soft authority in both subtle and overt ways. "He's someone who isn't afraid to be himself," says Hannah Louise, a 28-year-old fan from Manchester, England. "He has an idea and a vision, and he almost effortlessly conveys that to the world. His impact on music and other male artists is clear, from the way they dress to the way they perform."

Styles is far from the first pop star to play with gender, fashion, identity, and theatricality. But unlike David Bowie, Madonna, Prince, and Lady Gaga, whose costumes were designed to shock or to announce a career pivot, Styles seems to be advocating for simply dressing as you fancy. He sees it as fun, not a provocation. In 2019, he spoke to *The Guardian* about his relationship to fashion, saying: "What women wear. What men wear. For me it's not a question of that. If I see a nice shirt and get told, 'But it's for ladies,' I think: 'Okaaaay? Doesn't make me want to wear it less, though.' I think the moment you feel more comfortable with yourself, it all becomes a lot easier."

Whether Styles intends to make a social statement or not with each and every styling, the impact is undeniable, as Celeste Clapp-Hodgson, a 43-year-old fan from Houston, attests. "He's shown that men can paint their nails, wear makeup or clothes that make them feel good—even dresses!—and still be confident and comfortable in who they are," Clapp-Hodgson says. "More than anything, he seems to encourage people to be themselves without worrying so much about fitting into a specific box."

Lizette Venegas, a 25-year-old from Fresno, California, has been a Harry Styles fan since the age of 9, when she and her sisters stumbled upon a video of One Direction performing Coldplay's "Viva La Vida" on *The X Factor.* Sixteen years later, all grown up, Venegas says the fact that Styles is still her No.1 musician is a reflection of how she sees and lives in the world. "I do feel your favorite of everything represents who you are, because it does speak loudly to things you will support and stand by," she says. "[Styles] upholds values that are important to me, especially with things like not upholding the patriarchy and instead [contextualizing] gender as a construct. For me, I'm happy to see him do things like that."

A SOFT MASCULINITY

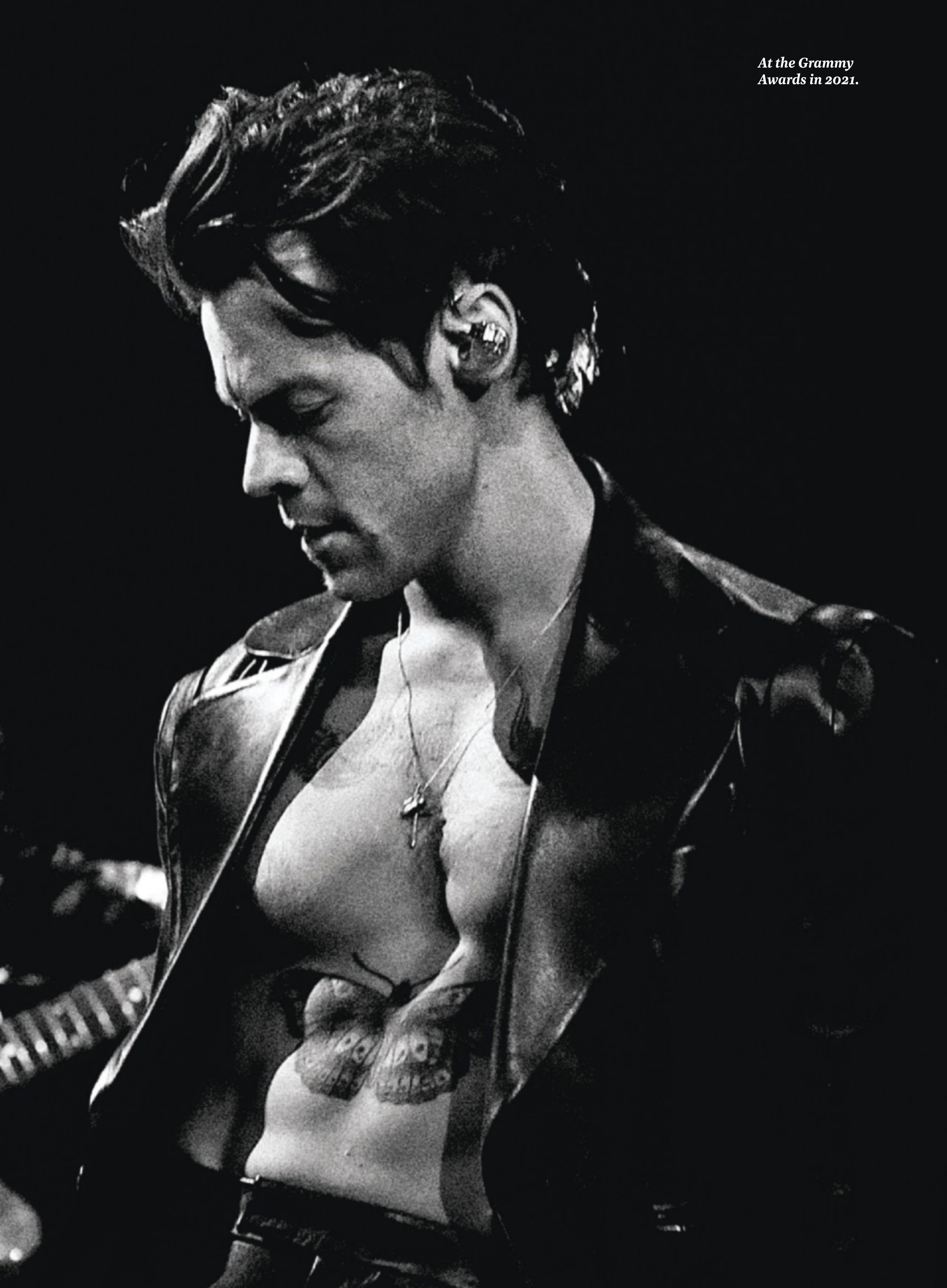
Styles' brand of soft masculinity goes beyond surface-level self-expression. In British and American cultures, in which mental health is often stigmatized, especially for men, the pop star encourages emotional openness, vulnerability, and resilience. In 2022, Styles spoke to *Better Homes & Gardens* about his relationship to therapy.

"I thought it meant that you were broken," he said. "I wanted to be the one who could say I didn't need it." But Styles fought through the internalized shame. He has been seeing a therapist since 2017 and says it has allowed him to "open up rooms" in himself.

"CHERRY" FEELS PERSONAL, SAYS ONE FAN: "I LIKE THAT HARRY INCLUDED A VOICEMAIL, BECAUSE IT GIVES LISTENERS A SMALL GLIMPSE INTO A REAL MOMENT."

This emotional vulnerability comes through in Styles' music, even as he evolves as an artist. The 32-year-old has experimented with different genre focuses on his albums—from the retro rock of 2017's *Harry Styles,* to the emotional pop-rock of 2019's *Fine Line,* to the city pop of 2022's *Harry's House,* to the understated dance-pop of 2026's *Kiss All the Time. Disco, Occasionally.* But emotional honesty has been a clear and constant goal.

"One of the things I love about [the *Fine Line* track] 'Cherry' is how personal it feels," says Clapp-Hodgson of her favorite Styles song. "I like that Harry included a voicemail in the song, because it gives listeners a small glimpse into a real moment from his life. It makes the song feel even more authentic and vulnerable, like he's sharing a piece of his world rather than just singing about a feeling."



At the Grammy Awards in 2021.

Walking the red carpet for **Don't Worry Darling** *at the Venice International Film Festival in 2022.*

Fans reacted to a Styles performance during Radio 1's Big Weekend in 2022 at War Memorial Park in Coventry, England.

In a time in which toxic expressions of masculinity have become more normalized, Styles has built his public persona on a respect for girls and women that is directly tied to his start in a boy band. Many teen idols distance themselves from their fame-starting project once they become an adult, but Styles speaks about his One Direction days—and the fangirls that lifted him to superstardom—with gratitude. (Plus, he is famously close to his mother and his older sister, Gemma Styles.)

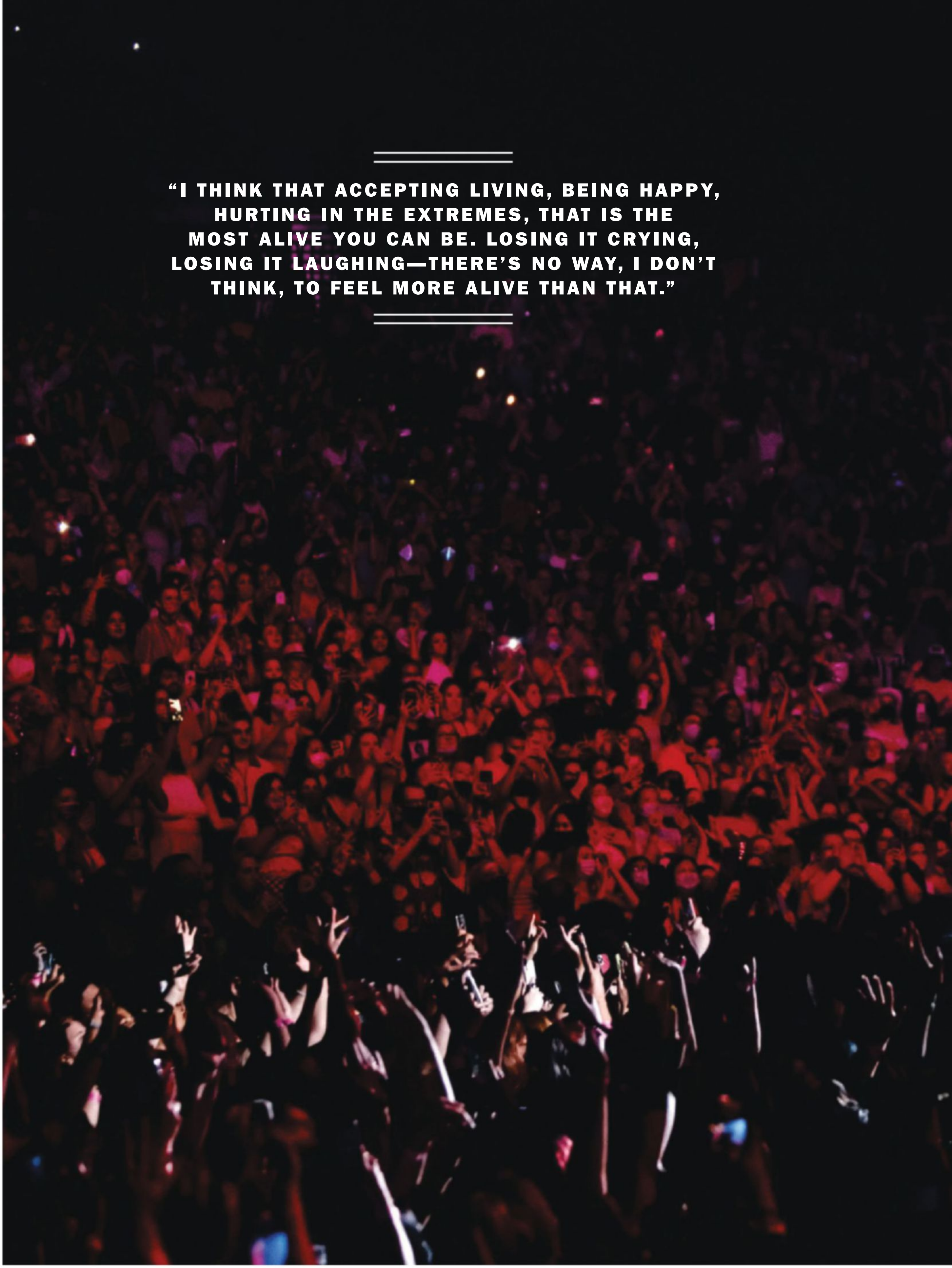
"How can you say young girls don't get it?" Styles asked in a 2017 interview with *Rolling Stone*. "They're our future. Our future doctors, lawyers, mothers, presidents, they kind of keep the world going. . . . Teenage-girl fans—they don't lie. If they like you, they're *there*. They don't act 'too cool.' They like you, and they tell you. Which is *sick*."

For Leticia Epps, a 33-year-old from Richmond, Virginia, Styles' discography is the only music her entire family can agree on when they're all together in the car. "He is for everyone," she says. "He respects women. His messaging is always female-friendly and girl power–[centric]." Referencing "Dance No More," a track off of *Kiss All the Time* in which Styles shouts, "Respect your mother!," Epps asks: "How am I not loving my kids singing that all day? How am I not buying that T-shirt?" (The official Harry Styles store sells a purple baby tee with that particular lyric printed boldly across the front.)

CONCERTS AS COMMUNITY

Styles has quickly become known as a once-in-a-lifetime performer. But his concerts are more

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



> "I THINK THAT ACCEPTING LIVING, BEING HAPPY, HURTING IN THE EXTREMES, THAT IS THE MOST ALIVE YOU CAN BE. LOSING IT CRYING, LOSING IT LAUGHING—THERE'S NO WAY, I DON'T THINK, TO FEEL MORE ALIVE THAN THAT."

The opening show for Love on Tour at MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas in 2021.

At the Jingle Bell Ball at London's O2 Arena in December 2019. Opposite: At the 2021 Grammy Awards, where he won best pop solo performance for "Watermelon Sugar."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

than just an excuse to see the pop star doing what he does best. Under the superstar's direction, the events have become feel-good moments where community belonging and parasocial connection come together for two hours of joyful expression. Patricia Hanlon, a 66-year-old from Ireland's County Kildare, became a Harry Styles fan a few years ago when her TikTok algorithm started pushing the British pop star, but it was a concert that solidified her standom.

"[My daughter and I] saw him at Wembley, and I was completely hooked after that," Hanlon says. "It was such a good concert. I think it is the energy and the atmosphere that he brings, and that he brings so many strangers together in such a lovely way." As a more mature fan, Hanlon has the perspective of longtime music fandom. "I went to see [David Bowie], I went to see Michael Jackson, I went to see Prince, and none of them interacted with the audience in the way that Harry does."

Styles encourages concert crowds to dress up, dance, and be whoever they are. He takes breaks mid-performance to have conversations with fans, often instigated by the reading of a sign that might explain a recent coming out, breakup, or birthday. Through these humorous yet respectful

With the 50-piece Jules Buckley Orchestra in London, June 2026.

interactions, he embodies his slogan to “treat people with kindness.” At the final concert of Love on Tour, Styles told the audience, “I don’t get to do this if you guys don’t come. I know that more than anyone else. You guys being here tonight, I know you wanted to make it special for me. You make it special for me every single night.”

MAINTAINING AUTHENTICITY

Styles has evolved into a respected artist who gets props from music legends such as Stevie Nicks (who calls Styles her “love child” with Mick Fleetwood) and Elton John (who describes Styles as “fabulous”) and recognition from the Recording Academy. He has sold out world tours and topped the charts again and again. And he has done it all by betting on himself, his fans, and a kind of emotional authenticity that inspires others.

“I think I’ve always had the conversation with myself about if I ever checked in with myself and I don’t love it, it’s not fun anymore, I kind of made a promise to myself that I wouldn’t do it,” he told Apple Music in 2026 after the release of *Kiss All the Time. Disco, Occasionally.* “I don’t think it’s fair, in a lot of ways. I don’t think it’s fair to me. I really don’t think it’s fair to the fans for me to not really be there anymore.”

That ongoing self-conversation allows Styles to consider whether (and for how long) he will continue to perform as a pop star because he loves it or because it’s what he’s been doing since he was 16, walking onto that *X Factor* stage without a clue about all that would come next. “I think, for a long time, even having that conversation with myself, I thought, ‘You’re so ungrateful. How can you ever think about deciding not to do it?’” he told Apple Music. Now he sees the conversation as integral to his artistic and personal journey.

Styles remains suspicious of entitlement. “There’s a point where it shifts [from people saying you’re lucky to people saying you deserve it],” he said in the Apple Music interview. “And I think that is actually the more dangerous part. Because . . . when you’re doing something great, you feel like you deserve it. And when you’re not feeling great or you don’t do something perfectly, you feel like you don’t deserve this.” To combat this, Styles leans into gratitude. “Instead of going, ‘You don’t deserve this. You shouldn’t be here,’ if you can stay like, ‘I’m so grateful to be here. I’m so grateful that this is my life,’ that’s such a gift.” ☐

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

He looks good in everything—and in his case, that could be anything.

BY DAVID COLMAN

WE HAVE QUESTIONS.

Whether we posted on socials, asked our friends, or kept our thoughts to ourselves, this was a common response to the last decade of Harry Styles' colorfully offbeat and unconventional wardrobe decisions. This is definitely not the same as it was.

The curiosity peaked six years ago when Styles, who was then 26, appeared on the cover of American *Vogue*'s December 2020 issue in a shoulder-baring Gucci dress created by designer Alessandro Michele. Putting Styles on the cover—he was the first man to appear solo in the marquee position—was a bold move by the magazine, and it caused a sensation. Just as Styles isn't merely any pop star, this wasn't just any dress. In palest blue lace, with a shirred bodice and a tiered, floor-sweeping skirt, this was a sumptuous ball gown worthy of a Mayfair debutante.

For those who had not followed Styles' journey from One Direction wunderteen to solo sex symbol, the cover sparked queries galore. First and foremost was simply: Wait—what? Is this that same guy with the wicked-sweet smile? The guy who had almost single-handedly salvaged the Summer of COVID with "Watermelon Sugar"? Why is he in a dress? Is this just a cheeky provocation, or another gender revolution? Did he come out as gay? Only one unsatisfying sentence will answer them all: It's complicated. That is because understanding Styles' style is like understanding Styles' music. There is much parsing to be done.

For the 2026 Together, Together Tour, Styles, here at Wembley Stadium, is dressing offbeat office. Opposite: American Vogue*, 2020.*

First of all, the gender chitchat. Though Styles declines to talk about any aspect of his romantic life, news broke in April 2026 that he was engaged to his girlfriend, Zoë Kravitz, who'd been spotted with a large diamond ring on the fourth finger of her left hand. He's had relationships with some of the boldest-face-named women in the world, including Taylor Swift, Kendall Jenner, and Olivia Wilde, and has been linked to plenty of others.

Styles' dating history became something of a bone of contention after the *Vogue* cover, with LGBTQ celebrities such as *Pose* actor Billy Porter angrily calling out the magazine for featuring a cis white man in women's clothes instead of someone for whom the gesture was meaningful. "I had to fight my entire life to get to the place where I could wear a dress to the Oscars and not be gunned down—all he has to do is be white and straight," Porter said, adding, "He doesn't care; he's just doing it because it's the thing to do." Porter later walked some of that ire back, but he did put his finger on a volatile pressure point: the prickly question of who (if anyone) owns the idea of men in women's clothes.

The foundations for this clothing-gender debate were laid among the adolescents of the 2010s. And Styles was one of them, having turned 16 in 2010, when he joined One Direction and a host of new concepts that blended fashion and identity were taking off in the social-media-sphere. *Curated. Mixtape. Mashup. Fluid. Code switching.* Armed with iPhones and hashtags, Gen Z were considering clothing in the same way they posted on Instagram—not to establish a sexual orientation, but to feel a vibe.

Another more relevant term started hitting the hashtags a few years later, taking off as Styles' solo career did mid-decade—*femboy*. Coyly leavening a boyish masculinity with traditional girlie things like beads, lace, and makeup, #femboy became a popular vibe that dotted its way across the internet, associated with anime characters, cosplayers, and social media influencers.

In 2016, Styles was nowhere near this. In May, after One Direction went on permanent hiatus, Styles sheared off his long hair for his role in Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk*, which many people read as Styles cutting ties and heading in his own direction. That fall, when British indie fashion magazine *Another Man* featured him on its cover, it published three variations, while inside, the singer channeled Mick Jagger and David Bowie in androgynous Gucci looks, a far cry from the more outré things to come.

But behind the scenes, the die had been cast. About a year earlier, Styles had met stylist Harry Lambert and Gucci's then lead designer, Alessandro Michele, and gotten to know them. When Styles relaunched as a solo act with his self-titled debut album,

At Madison Square Garden during the Live on Tour, 2018. Opposite: Swarovski-bombing the 2023 Grammys.

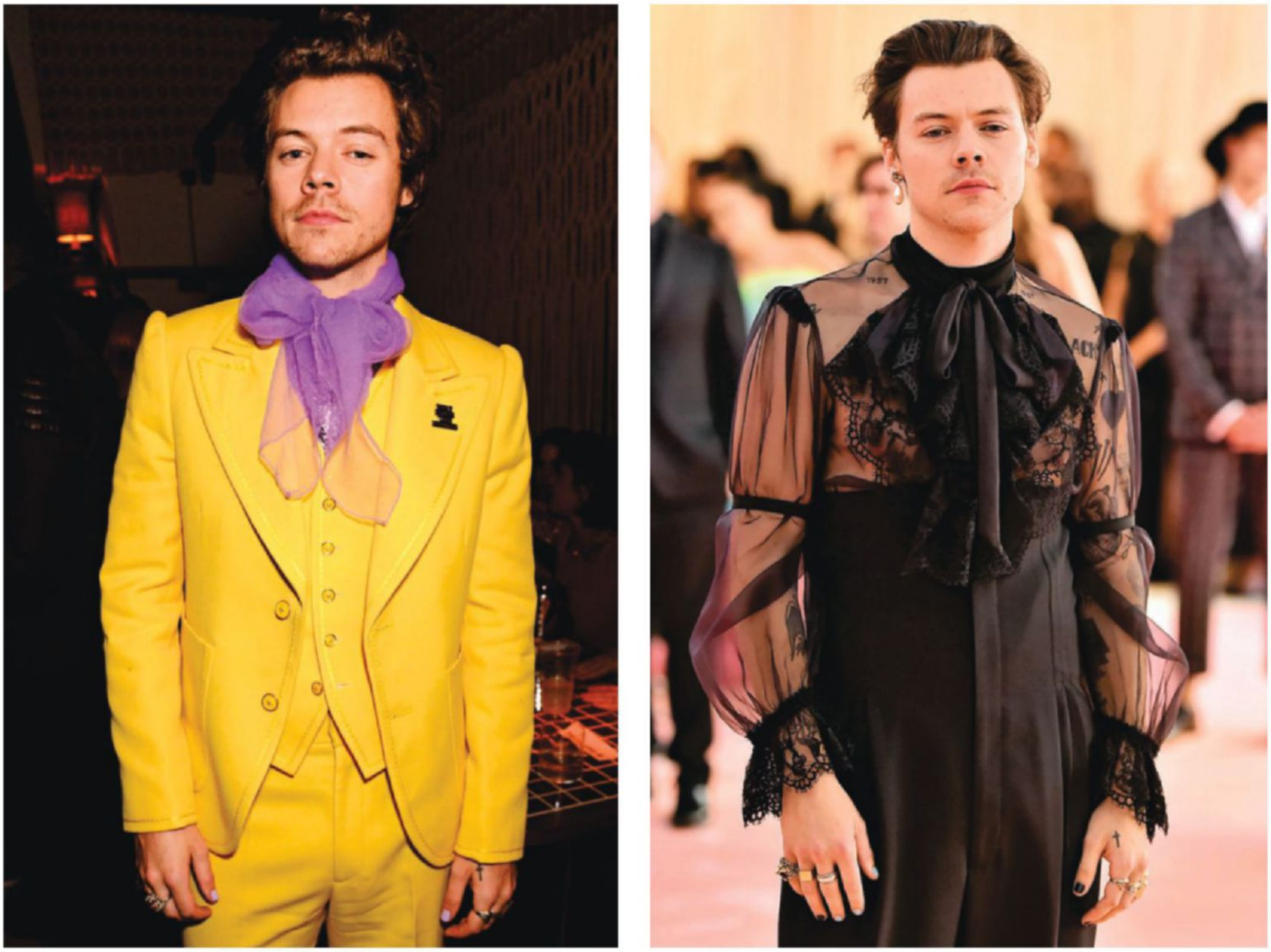
Lambert and Michele both played roles in his look. In 2017 and 2018, while promoting the disc, Styles performed and posed in femboy-ish looks designed by Michele: flowy, high-waisted pants; colorful floral-print suits; flouncy silk blouses. But those could still arguably read "flamboyant rock star"—and there's quite a list of pop rockers who have flirted with such things, in every decade: Marc Bolan, David Lee Roth, Kurt Cobain, Jake Shears.

Then, in 2019, the pearls and nail polish famously showed up at the Met Gala. Styles also started diving into other feminine-leaning fripperies. The steady beat led up to the now famous promo shoot for his first appearance hosting *Saturday Night Live*, in which he appeared in a full-on pale-pink ballerina tutu and tights. (And he looked damn good.)

In 2020, when he hit a major trifecta—with his first U.S. No. 1, "Watermelon Sugar," his first Grammy nominations, and the *Vogue* cover—Styles was on top of the world. In 2021, when he performed "Watermelon" at the Grammy Awards in a simple black Gucci leather suit with a celadon-green feather boa, he had arrived as an icon.

He and Lambert, it seemed, were veering in a completely new direction. It wasn't radical, like Prince's purple male erotica, Lady Gaga's stream of spectacle, or Billie Eilish's sacky countersexuality. But it felt new nonetheless. Here was Styles, conspicuously male, blithely dressing up in women's clothing, and it worked. His fans not only loved it, they began regularly copying his style choices, making Styles an object of female desire and also a source of female fashion inspiration.

The reasons it worked are, on the one hand, cultural, and, on the other, personal. Five or 10 years earlier, a man wearing pearls would have raised eyebrows, not heart rates. But today's curation culture prides itself on its daring and mismatching—taking one element from this culture, a second from that country, a third from that collection—and leaving all the specific associations and origins behind.



At a 2020 BRIT Awards afterparty (above left) in suit and blouse from Marc Jacobs's womenswear collection; Alessandro Michele designed his 2019 Met Gala look (above right) and 2022 Coachella outfit (right).

In a way, the complaint that Harry Styles was pirating a wardrobe that belonged to the LGBTQ world misses the point: pirating style was already the move, and Styles played along perfectly. Nothing about him is androgynous—he's a muscular, handsome, and tattooed andro-guy in fabulous clothing. That point is underscored by the way Styles shares the spotlight with Lambert, whose own star in fashion has steadily risen as a result. For a pop headliner, the norm is to pretend that their style is their own effortless way of throwing things together. But in the new cultural formula, that attitude is old-fashioned, because "my self" and "my style" are not a continuum. In Styles' hands, the collaboration is more fun, creative, and fashion-coded.

And even if he doesn't personally feel a deep connection to everything he wears, the process itself does feel spontanesous. "I'll put on something that feels really flamboyant, and I don't feel crazy wearing it," Styles told *Vogue*. "I think if you get something that you feel amazing in, it's like a superhero outfit. Clothes are there to have fun with and experiment with and play with.

"What's really exciting is that all of these lines are just kind of crumbling away," he added. "When you take away 'There's clothes for men and there's clothes for women,' once you remove any barriers, obviously you open up the arena in which you can play. I'll go in shops sometimes, and I just find myself looking at the women's clothes thinking they're amazing. It's like anything—anytime you're putting barriers up in your own life, you're just limiting yourself. There's so much joy to be had in playing with clothes. I've never really thought too much

Styles wore custom Gucci to perform "As It Was" at the 2023 Grammys.

about what it means—it just becomes this extended part of creating something."

And that's where the personal part comes in. While all of the above is true, that doesn't mean the same approach would work for every performer. A more fey singer might get written off or sidelined as too queer-coded, and a more butch or laddish vocalist might get dismissed as acting crazy (or crazy for attention, at least). Of course, there have been those scandalized by Styles' attire, such as the far-right commentator Candace Owens, who called it "an attack on masculinity." But in general, it's been surprisingly uncontroversial—even Britain's ruthless Fleet Street press corps, who love nothing better than ridiculing pop stars, have gone easy on Styles.

That's because beneath the dresses, under the tattoos, Styles seems—shockingly enough—rather nice. Sweet. Open. Kind. Not a goody-goody, but a gentleman. He doesn't kiss and tell. There have been no arrests, public drunkenness, rehab stays, public feuds, meltdowns, racist rants, or social media scandals. He's the anti-Kanye. And this, if anything, is the persona behind his extraordinary voice, which is far more fluid at beautifully slipping in and out of all the various pop-genre inflections that infect his perfectly crafted and arranged music.

It's Styles' precise mismatch: the sweet and gorgeous boy next door with a dreamy baritone (who can sing the pants off any song in the book) oddly having the craziest, most sophisticated clothes in town. It's not just an act. It's not just a stunt. It may not be a revolution, but Styles has pushed the envelope far more than most pop stars have. In the annals of charisma management, he has pulled off an enviable twofer—making the world his oyster while shimmying in a string of pearls. ☐

The Harry Who Styles Harry Styles

The singer has natural pizzazz, but he also gets a hand from a pro who likes thrifting and stirring things up.

BY ELLA PIPER CLAFFY

Talking about Harry Lambert, Harry Styles' stylist, can be a bit confusing, since the two share a first name, and Lambert's job title is almost the same as his client's surname. But one thing is clear: Lambert both shapes and executes Styles' distinctive fashion choices, perhaps explaining why the *Guardian* once described him as "Thomas Cromwell to Styles' Henry VIII." In short, Lambert is an indispensable adviser to a man of strong opinions.

The two met back in 2014, when Styles was still the shaggy-haired One Direction heartthrob in skinny jeans, looking to change his image, and Lambert was mostly styling magazine shoots, wanting to stretch his wings. Introduced by a mutual friend, they got together at a restaurant in London, where Lambert showed the singer a collection of looks that resonated with Styles. Today, that shared sensibility has led to Styles' reputation as a swaggering and silly sex symbol partial to "preloved" clothing, frills, and jewery.

Despite the nods to the past, Lambert—who also counts actors Emma Corrin and Josh O'Connor and British soccer star Dominic Calvert-Lewin as clients—says he's not going for timelessness with his styling but instead participating in the cultural conversation. Gender is one recurrent topic, as exemplified by the "balloon bra" that Corrin wore to the 2022 Olivier Awards, when the actor, who is nonbinary, was nominated for best actress. Corrin wore a bra that mimicked balloons over their dress, Lambert's cheeky attempt to play with gender narratives for an event that skews "a bit stuffy." he said. The same philosophy was at work when Lambert advised Styles to wear a ball gown for his 2020 V*ogue* cover. The reaction to the outfit was mixed, and some of Styles' LGBTQ fan base even accused him of queer-baiting, but Lambert was unfazed. "I just think playing with gender stereotypes shouldn't matter," he told *GQ* in 2021.

With a small coterie of clients, the 39-year-old tends to be close with each of them. He and Corrin have matching tattoos that read "Quite Pricey," while he and Styles have co-nicknames—Lambert is Susan, and Styles is Sue. During Styles' current Together, Together world tour, as with prior tours, Lambert is often the last person Styles sees before he steps out onto the stage. On the tour's opening night, Styles wore a button-down, baggy trousers, and a flower-printed tie—a pared-back look that might have subverted expectations. But with Lambert guiding Styles' wardrobe, fans have learned to expect the unexpected.

Illustrated Man

The singer has some 60 designs inked on his body. What do they mean?

BY PETER FLAX

He expresses himself in his fashion choices, advocacy, and songs, so why not his epidermis? As anyone who has seen images of Harry Styles knows, the singer likes his tattoos, which he shows off with bare-chested and bicep-revealing looks. He took baby steps on his 18th birthday, when he got a star on his upper arm, and he has added dozens since then, for some 60 tats in all. (That grand total includes a few designs that he added to cover up older ink, like the anchor on his left wrist that obscures lettering that read "I can't change.") While he occasionally talks about some of the tattoos—like the "Big" tattoo on his toe that he revealed on *The Late Late Show*, which he has called "stupid"—he more typically lets fans speculate about the meaning of the designs.

BLACK STAR

Styles got his first tattoo on February 1, 2012—his 18th birthday—at the Shamrock Social Club, an iconic tattoo shop in West Hollywood. Located on his left bicep, the tattoo—inked by the legendary Freddy Negrete, who honed his inking chops while serving time in correctional facilities when he was young—was originally an outline of a five-point star. Styles returned later that year to have it filled in.

GEM COOKIE

Styles has multiple tattoos that reference his older sister, Gemma. One of them, located just to the left of the black star, depicts an iced gem cookie, a small shortbread biscuit topped with colorful meringue that is popular in England. In addition to this tattoo, which Styles got in the summer of 2012, he also has ink of the letter G and her name in Hebrew on his shoulder, as well as a palm tree that matches a tattoo Gemma has on the same spot on her arm.

PACKERS LOGO

When Styles started spending more time in the U.S., he often hung out with a friend originally from Wisconsin and developed a love for the Green Bay Packers. The singer's enthusiasm got so intense that in September 2012 he had Negrete tattoo the team's logo on his arm, next to the star. On his 2020 episode of NPR's Tiny Desk, Styles explained how he preemptively got the tattoo as part of a silly bet with a friend over whether the Packers would win a specific game.

PIRATE SHIP

In December 2012, Styles returned to see Negrete, this time along with Taylor Swift, whom he was dating. During this visit, Styles got a tattoo of a large pirate ship, with a mix of fine lines and shadowing, on the outside of his left arm. (Negrete is known for his elaborate black and gray designs.) Styles has said that he got this particular tattoo to remind himself about traveling home when he's on tour.

"17 BLACK"

In August 2012, tattoo artist Kevin Paul, who operated a shop near the English city of Manchester, was working on a piece for the musician Ed Sheeran, who mentioned that his mate Harry wanted a tattoo. It didn't take long before Paul scheduled a session with Styles at Styles' home, inking this tattoo below his left clavicle. Paul has said that Styles told him the tattoo was a reference to a big one-night gambling loss of about £100,000 in Australia during a One Direction tour.

"PINGU"

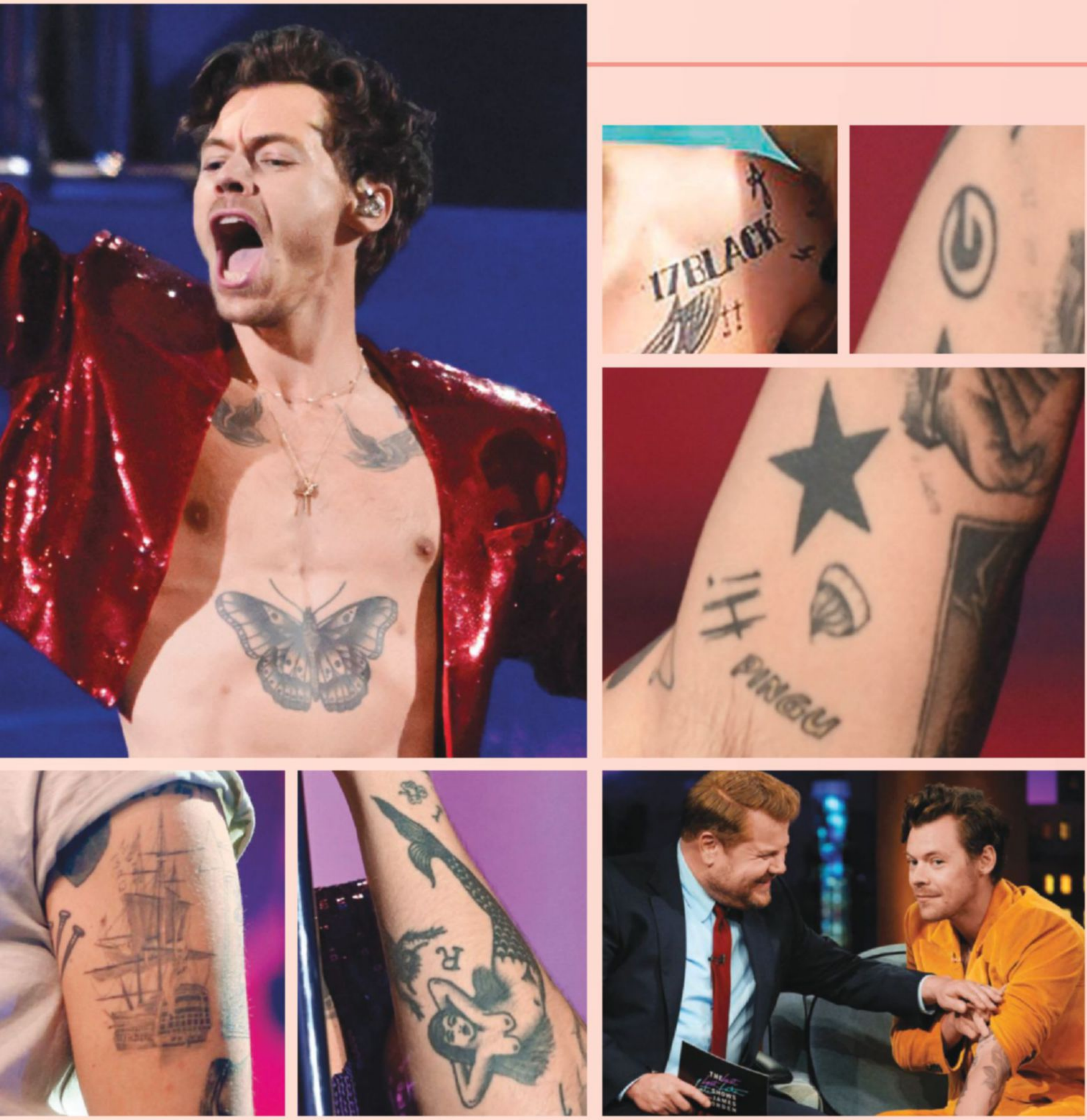
Also in August 2012, during a night of drinking, Styles and Sheeran discovered that they shared a love for the Swiss animated children's show *Pingu* (which aired in the UK in the '90s). They turned to Kevin Paul for the ink. Sheeran got a tattoo of the show's eponymous marine bird, while Styles opted for the word "Pingu" on his left arm, near the gem cookie. That same night, Sheeran inked a small padlock on his friend's wrist.

SWALLOWS

In November 2012, the day before he performed with One Direction on the TV show *The X-Factor* in Los Angeles, Styles visited Negrete, who added two large swallows on either side of his chest. In an interview a couple days later, Styles said he was attracted to old sailor tattoos that symbolize traveling. He also said getting those swallows tattooed on his chest hurt.

BUTTERFLY

In January 2013, Styles dropped in on the Old Habits studio in London, where Liam Sparkes put a large butterfly on the singer's sternum. Although Styles has not publicly discussed the meaning of this design, Sparkes, who has done at least nine tats for Styles, has said the butterfly is an oblique reference to the 1973 film *Papillon,* about a safecracker (played by Steve McQueen) who is unjustly imprisoned and gets a butterfly tattoo signifying his desire to escape.



Clockwise from top left: The famed butterfly, flanked by swallows on Styles' chest; "17 Black"; the Packers logo; "Pingu," the black star, and the gem cookie; with James Corden; the mermaid; the pirate ship.

MERMAID

In November 2014, Sparkes completed a large topless mermaid on Styles' left forearm. When asked by one Hollywood outlet to explain, Styles simply replied, "I am a mermaid," without further context—or knowing that in 2021, previously unpublished images of him dressed as Ariel for a *Saturday Night Live* promotion would hit the internet, causing a kerfuffle. After one fan wondered about the mermaid figure, Styles replied that "everyone should love themselves, and we shouldn't strive for perfection."

"LATE LATE"

In December 2015, Styles and his One Direction bandmates appeared on *The Late, Late Show with James Corden* and played a tense but comical game of Tattoo Roulette, in which Corden and the musicians each randomly picked a red box. Styles wound up losing, picking the one box that contained a card reading "Tattoo," and got the words "Late Late" inked on his left arm just before Corden hugged him.

BORN TO PERFORM

He showed a flair for fashion from his primary school days. He loved to act. And in high school, he rocked it in a cover band. As a hopeful pop star, Harry Styles traveled in one direction: up.

Jingle Ball at Madison Square Garden with One Direction, 2012.

THE CHARMER FROM CHESHIRE

From his youth in Holmes Chapel, Styles was already honing his pop star chops, dressing up in quirky costumes, acting in school plays, and performing in a rock band with friends.

BY JED GOTTLIEB

EVERYTHING CAN BE TRACED TO ONE pivotal moment. The captivating voice behind chart-topping music. The unparalleled sense of fashion. That irresistible charm.

Harry Styles took the stage with all the qualities that would propel him to global stardom. All the qualities, plus a makeshift mouse costume. "I was 5, and there was a story about a mouse who lived in a church, and I was Barney, the mouse," Styles remembered of his primary-school stage debut. "I had to wear my sister's tights, and a headband with ears on it, and I had to sing a song all by myself."

Sure, the crowd size was modest. And yes, his only two superfans at that point were his mom and dad, Anne Twist and Desmond "Des" Styles. But bigger—much, much bigger—stages weren't that far off.

Harry Edward Styles was born in Worcestershire, in central England, on February 1, 1994. He came into the world on a Tuesday afternoon, which probably delighted his classic rock–loving dad (see the Moody Blues' 1967 smash "Tuesday Afternoon"). Harry was still a baby when Anne and Des moved the family, which also included Harry's big sister, Gemma, to the sleepy northwestern county of Cheshire, not far from Liverpool. It was there that little Harry won (relatively) bigger roles in primary-school productions of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and *Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat*. He tended to have his own interpretations of his characters. In *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang,* for example, he channeled Buzz Lightyear of Toy Story, while for *Joseph,* "I was the pharaoh, but I was an Elvis pharaoh."

Elvis was a big deal in the Styles house. Harry's father, Des, played the King constantly, along with healthy doses of the Rolling Stones and Beatles. Harry soaked it all in and sang along. His family even got him a karaoke machine, and Harry would record himself over the backing tracks. "I made my grandfather a tape

Harry (here in an undated image) was 5 when he made his theatrical debut as Barney, a mouse, in a primary-school play.

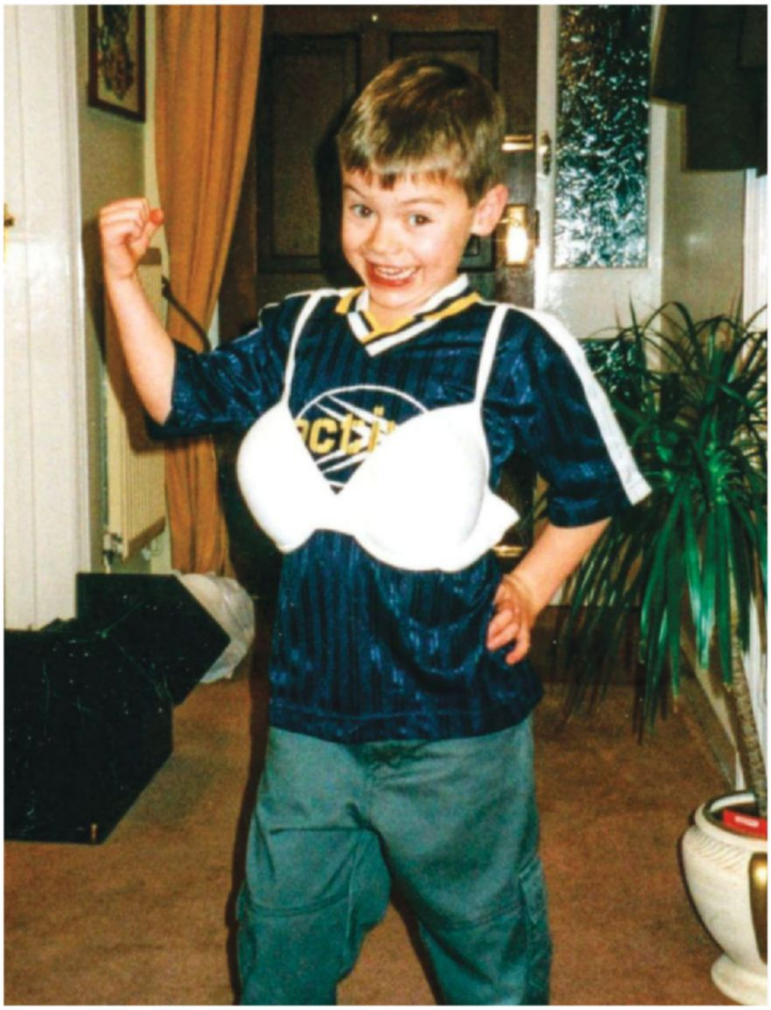
of me doing Elvis songs on one side and all Eminem on the other side," he said. "Unfortunately, I accidentally played him the wrong side."

Regardless of the material, "Jailhouse Rock" or "Without Me," Des was convinced his son would be a star. "He'd always charm people," Des said. "From performing in the car or on holiday, he'd always be able to hold a crowd or hold a room, even when he was a kid."

That Harry found reading a chore early on and felt lukewarm about school in general didn't translate into being a bad student. Certainly, young Harry had a drive to entertain everyone around him, and to make sure he looked good while doing it—a desire that meshed with his mom's interests, as Anne loved to dress up her kids and was unable to reel in Gemma, the studious one, in costumes. Harry was the one to get detailed papier-mâché outfits. One particular favorite was a Dalmatian getup. "He would just spend an inordinate amount of time wearing that outfit," Gemma said.

Harry has often described his childhood as idyllic, but there was one big bump. Anne and Des split up when Harry was 7 years old. The pop star says he doesn't remember there being much drama to it. In fact, he says he doesn't remember much of anything concerning the breakup, including when Anne and Des sat him down to explain that Des wouldn't be living with mom and the kids anymore. "I mean, I was 7," Harry recalled decades later. "It's one of those things. Feeling supported and loved by my parents never changed."

After the split, mom, son, and daughter moved 30 minutes outside the heart of Cheshire to the village of Holmes Chapel (population 6,200). Around this time, Harry graduated from singing along to Elvis songs to a slightly more formal musical education. The family lived above a pub, which his mom owned for a few years. In the evenings, the sound of the band jamming down below would come up to Harry's bedroom. "I remember the first night, it was like a night where a band was playing, and I just thought, 'How am I going to get to sleep?'" Harry recalled. "By the end, I could fall asleep next to the band, I was so used to the noise."



Harry got to know the pub's regulars, as well as many of the band members who cycled through. At about age 10, he picked up a guitar and got a few pointers from someone in one of the bands. He thinks it might have been a guitarist from Deep Purple. While that's not impossible, it's a bit of a long shot, considering that at the time, Deep Purple was playing international soccer stadiums and major festivals.

Harry's budding musical chops came in handy a few years later, when he and three schoolmates formed a band called White Eskimo (the members just thought the name sounded cool). Harry took the job of lead singer. The quartet built its repertoire out of a range of covers, including Amy Winehouse's "Valerie," Jet's "Are You Gonna Be My Girl," and Bryan Adams' "Summer of '69"

Anne Twist liked to dress her son up, but he also created his own looks (opposite, top). As Harry got older, he played soccer and formed a band called White Eskimo (above).

("We did it more toward the Bowling for Soup [pop punk] version," Harry later noted), plus a handful of songs they wrote themselves.

The standout original composition, in Harry's recollection, at least, was "Gone in a Week." "It was about luggage. 'I'll be gone in a week or two/Trying to find myself someplace new/I don't need any jackets or shoes/The only luggage I need is you,'" he said with a laugh, impressed at his teenage wit. "I was like, 'Sick.'"

White Eskimo might have been a long way from One Direction, but they made their mark on the Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School scene. The group won a local battle of the bands. Then, miraculously, the kids scored a gig as a wedding band. A girl they knew from school who was a few years younger helped secure them the job of entertaining at her mom's wedding reception. Harry and his mates nearly got in over their heads. "We said we'd do it, and then we found out it was the weekend coming up, and we hadn't done anything for it," Harry remembered. "So we asked the bride what kind of stuff she wanted, and she said she didn't mind, but she wanted some Bob Marley songs. Literally in three days, not even three, probably two days, we learned like 25 songs. We might have known like three of them before. I was 16, maybe 15, singing these Bob Marley songs."

Like any smart aspiring musician, Harry didn't quit his day job. In early high school, he held down the counter at Holmes Chapel bakery W. Mandeville. Young Harry worked on Saturdays from 5 a.m. until 4 p.m. and made about $40 a shift. It wasn't glamorous work, but W. Mandeville's association with the future icon was enough to turn the shop into a stop on the Harry Styles Holmes Chapel walking tour years later. "People come in from all over the world," W. Mandeville owner and fourth-generation baker Simon Wakefield said of his shop. "All over the U.K., but then Brazil, the U.S., Australia, Japan, everywhere."

With school, a band, and a part-time job, Harry was busy, though he still found time for a long-distance romance. Felicity Skinner, who was his "first proper girlfriend," had an infectious laugh and a slight air of mystery, and lived 90 minutes by train from Holmes Chapel. No matter. For a teenager, the weekly journeys to see her were odysseys. "I'd finish on Saturdays at 4:30 and it was a 4:42 train, and if I missed it, there wasn't one for another hour or two," Harry said. "So I'd finish and sprint to the train station. Spent 70 percent of my wages on train tickets. I just worshipped the ground she walked on. And she knew, probably to a fault, a little. That was a tough one. I was 15."

Years later, the memory of Felicity's perfume (Alien, by Mugler) stuck with him. He'd be in an elevator or at a party and catch a hint of the scent. Sometimes he'd have to turn and say, "Alien, right?"

"Sometimes they're impressed, and sometimes they're a little creeped out. 'Stop smelling me,'" he said.

Even with a little heartbreak, a taste of the rock and roll life, and his parents' divorce, Harry kind of skipped the whole teenage angst phase. He can think back on a bit of darkness: He dressed in all black for a hot minute, listened to some heavy music, and had a few Nirvana T-shirts. But it seems to have been less a phase and more a blink of the eye, and he navigated the tough bits, such as knowing at age 10 he had to "protect Mom at all costs," with some assistance. Anne was briefly married to businessman John Cox. After that relationship ended, she fell in love with Robin Twist, who became a stepfather to Harry and Gemma.

When Anne and Robin married in 2013, Harry acted as best man and Gemma as maid of honor. (Robin died of cancer in 2017.) Dad Des said the couple did a great job with Harry, but that his son was a pretty great kid from the get-go. "[Harry's] polite and well mannered, he's trained up properly—but it wasn't me. Of course not, it would be Anne," Des reflected, adding, "I say, show me the lad at 7, and I'll show you the man." Anne agreed. "As a very little boy, he was very much like he is

W. Mandeville
of
Holmes Chapel

In high school, Harry worked Saturdays at the W. Mandeville Bakery, often starting at 5 a.m., and made an impression on his boss, who later said the teen was always very polite. The shop is located in Holmes Chapel's town center (opposite) and can be seen on the far left.

now, just a smaller version," she said.

White Eskimo broke up, but Harry still dreamed of making it big. "I always thought he had something," Anne said. "He takes his influences from what he feels, what he's listened to, what he likes. He's not thinking, 'Right, I need to make this song for this particular demographic.' He does what feels right to him—and it seems to be universally appreciated."

As judge Simon Cowell bluntly noted during Harry's *X Factor* audition in 2010, "moms normally don't know" about the kind of talent required to become a star. But Anne did. The year before Harry tried out for the show, he watched the boys his age giving it a go and thought he had the vocal chops to compete with them. But it was Harry's mother who actually filled out the application that got him his shot. "Then three weeks [after she applied for me], I walked upstairs and she said, 'Oh, you've got your *X-Factor* audition Sunday,'" he said of the life-changing opportunity. "I was like, 'OK.'"

A little nonchalant, but what was an audition for Simon Cowell to a kid who's already starred as Barney the singing church mouse, wearing tights and his sister's headband? □

PARENTAL GUIDANCE

Mom Anne Twist and dad Desmond Styles knew their son was going places from an early age.

BY SOPHIE DODD

HARRY STYLES' PARENTS HAVE ALWAYS been his biggest supporters.

The Grammy winner was born on February 1, 1994, to Anne Twist and Desmond "Des" Styles. The pair split when Harry was 7, with his dad officially moving out a few years later. Speaking to *Rolling Stone* in 2017 about his parents' divorce, Styles said he was young enough at the time that he "kind of block[ed] it out" and that ultimately, it never impacted the way they each cared for him and his older sister, Gemma.

Regardless of the state of his parents' marriage, he felt loved and supported by both, he told the magazine. Since the start of Harry's career, which took off in 2010 after he auditioned for *The X Factor,* his dad has seen him perform multiple times, as has his mom, who was also on hand for the filming of the One Direction documentary.

Early in the One Direction days, Des, a director at a management consultancy firm, gave several interviews about his increasingly famous son.

"I always knew he'd succeed at whatever he did, because he'd always charm people," Des told *The Daily Record* in 2012. "From performing in the car or on holiday, he'd always be able to hold a crowd or hold a room, even when he was a kid," the proud father told the U.K. news outlet.

Des emphasized that he never wanted to overstep any boundaries and said father and son were visiting less than they had in the past. Des was "not an estranged dad," he said, but he acknowledged that the frequency of their visits had tailed off. "I used to see Harry and his sister, Gemma, every couple of weeks," he said at the time. "I've always supported them financially and, when I can, emotionally." He added that while separating from Anne was difficult on their family, "These things happen ... I'm just very proud to be his dad, but I don't want to exploit that either," he said. "I just want to be here if he needs me."

Des followed One Direction for several stops along their Where We Are Tour in 2014, as well as on their final tour as a group, the On the Road Again Tour in the summer of 2015. He shared updates from both, shouting out some of his favorite shows along the way. "I've not seen all the 1D shows this tour, but I've seen a lot. Last night in Milano was the best so far by miles. Brilliant!" Des tweeted in June 2014.

Des continued to document his and Harry's interactions on Twitter in the following years, noting that Harry would always call him on his birthday and on Father's Day. "I am a very lucky and proud father for sure!" he tweeted in 2014, noting that he'd spoken to both of his children for Father's Day. The same year, on the fourth anniversary of Harry's life-altering tryout for *The X Factor*, Des gave a shout-out to the audition on Twitter. "Remember it well. [Harry] left early to be up at 5.30 [to be on time for the audition]. Who could've thought what would happen?!" he wrote.

More recently, Harry has kept his relationship

With Anne in 2013 after the BRIT Awards (left); with Des (top); with Anne and Gemma, from social media posts.

with his dad largely out of the public eye, though he has been more forthcoming about spending time with his mom. When Harry returned home to Cheshire, England, for Christmas in 2022, Anne shared smiling photos of herself with Harry, Gemma, and Gemma's boyfriend. "[My mom's house] is where I want to go when I want to spend some time," Harry told *Rolling Stone*.

In addition to posting about her younger child on social media, Anne has spoken to the press about him a number of times, including *The Daily Mail*. In a 2023 interview, she discussed the inspirations for his songwriting with the tabloid, noting that he doesn't tailor his songs to specific demographics but writes about what he feels, and that his fans seem to appreciate his genuine approach.

Anne also responded to critics who panned Harry's performance in the film *Don't Worry Darling*. "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all," she wrote on her Instagram Story, adding, "I'm astounded and saddened by the vitriolic comments on here, to be honest. I enjoyed the film. If it's not your cup of tea, don't go."

Anne has also frequently documented the times she's supported Harry on tour, often alongside Gemma. The mother-daughter duo cheered him on at a Love on Tour performance at Wembley Stadium in June 2022. "When I thought you couldn't get better . . . and I couldn't be prouder . . . you blew me away tonight," Anne gushed on Instagram alongside a photo of Harry performing.

Harry appeared to reference Des in his 2022 chart-topping single "As It Was," which reflected on the singer's relationship with fame. In one line, the star sings, "Your daddy lives by himself/He just wants to know that you're well." While some publications speculated that the lyric was about

Harry's dad checking in on him over the years as he navigated his path to stardom, in an interview with Apple Music, Styles said the song was about his life during the pandemic, when he had to slow down and be not just a musician but also a friend, brother, and son. He elaborated, saying, "Everything that happened in the pandemic, it's just never going to be the same as before. All of the things happening in the world, it's so obvious that it's just not going to be the same. You can't go backward, whether that's us as a people, or me in my personal life, or any of those things."

Des gives Anne credit for raising Harry and Gemma. After she split with Des, Anne went on to remarry twice: first businessman John Cox, and then Robin Twist in 2013.

"[Harry's] polite and well mannered, he's trained up properly—but it wasn't me. Of course not, it would be Anne," Des told *The Daily Record.* He added that while Anne and Robin had brought the pop star up, he felt like he'd had a positive influence on Harry in his youth.

When Anne tied the knot with Robin in June 2013, she enlisted her kids for two very special roles: Harry was best man, while Gemma was her maid of honor for the intimate ceremony in the Cheshire town of Congleton. "Harry couldn't stop smiling. He hardly left his mum's side, and she looked really proud of him. He sipped champagne and chatted to everyone," an insider revealed to the *Sunday Mirror* at the time.

Robin died of cancer in 2017. "Harry's stepfather, Robin Twist, sadly passed away this week after a long battle with cancer. The family asks for privacy at this time," Harry's rep told *People* in a statement. His bandmates all offered their condolences, each of them sharing heartfelt messages and tributes to Robin.

A few years later, Anne found love again with her current partner, Darren Dean-Rhodes. The couple often share sweet photos of each other on social media, where they also document their frequent travels around the world.

Anne says Harry has remained down to earth through a meteoric rise. In the 2023 interview with *The Daily Mail,* she noted that his personality was established when he was a little boy, and that he had the same outlook and disposition then as now.

Anne noted that Harry is very much a typical son. Whenever he comes to her home in Cheshire, his first order of business is to "open the fridge," she jokes. Speaking about her dynamic with her kids, she said they're "all close," and that geography is to blame for not spending more time together. "We see each other when we can," she told the newspaper.

LOVE ON TOUR
HARRY STYLES WITH SPECIAL GUESTS
THANKYOU
BEAUTIFUL
THATS WHAT I M
TALKING ABOUT

ONE DIRECTION IN THE FINAL!

In 2010, The X Factor *went to Holmes Chapel to visit Harry's childhood home (above) and for young fans to meet him (opposite, bottom). Opposite, top: Scrawling messages for Harry at a local railway aqueduct, 2024.*

Anne played a big role in Harry's love of fashion. As the first man ever to land a solo cover of American *Vogue*, Harry is a bona fide fashion icon. His sartorial sensibilities have their roots in playing dress-up as a kid.

"My mum loved to dress us up," Gemma told *Vogue,* noting that while it wasn't her thing, "Harry was always quite into it." Anne didn't hold back on her outfits, turning out some "really elaborate papier-mâché" looks and even a Dalmatian outfit.

"What women wear. What men wear. For me, it's not a question of that. If I see a nice shirt and get told, 'But it's for ladies.' I think: 'Okaaaay? Doesn't make me want to wear it less though,' Harry told the *Guardian* in 2019 of the pushback he often gets for wearing dresses, skirts, and other clothes that have traditionally been designed for women, adding: "I think the moment you feel more comfortable with yourself, it all becomes a lot easier."

After the *Vogue* cover, Anne said her penchant for playing dress-up with her kids may have influenced Harry's style. "I think maybe I had something to do with it," she said on British talk show *Lorraine*. "I was always a big fan of doing fancy dress with [him and his sister]," she added, saying that Harry "always embraced" it.

Anne was heartbroken by the death of Harry's former One Direction bandmate Liam Payne. Hours after the news broke that Payne had died at the age of 31 after falling from a balcony at a hotel in Argentina, she shared a tribute to him in a post on Instagram. Alongside an image of a broken heart emoji on a black background, Anne kept her caption short, writing, "Just a boy. . . ." ◻

This story originally appeared on People.com.

GOING IN ONE DIRECTION

The band finished third in its first season on *The X Factor*. Then the five teens became the show's most successful act ever.

BY CHRIS NASHAWATY

Zayn Malik, Harry Styles, Louis Tomlinson, Liam Payne, and Niall Horan on Abbey Road, of Beatles fame, in 2010.

IN THE SUMMER OF 2010, A LANKY 16-year-old from the village of Holmes Chapel stepped into the hot lights and walked onto a stage that had become Britain's most reliable career launchpad, and also its most intimidating. Dressed in black skinny jeans, with an unruly mop of curls on his head, he carried himself with the slightly nervous swagger of a teenager who seems to know he's charming but has no idea just how far that charm might take him. His name, of course, was Harry Styles.

The X Factor first aired on Britain's ITV in 2004, back when Styles was just 10. Created by Simon Cowell, the music reality competition series blew up into a national obsession in the U.K. almost immediately. It had already discovered a handful of promising hopefuls—soulful singer Leona Lewis, R&B vocalist Alexandra Burke—and made them into pop stars and tabloid fixtures. But there had been nothing remotely on the scale of what was about to happen as Styles took the stage.

The Cheshire teen introduced himself as a student who worked part-time in a bakery. He joked with the judges and smiled easily. When asked what he wanted, he gave the sort of answer young dreamers have given since the beginning of show business: He wanted people to know who he was. What happened next would alter the course of pop music for the decade.

Styles sang a verion of Train's "Hey, Soul Sister" and Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely," and while it was not the sort of audition that instantly announced a future superstar, it revealed something harder to quantify. He possessed charisma. *The X Factor* TV cameras loved him. The audience nearly rioted when one of the show's three judges, Louis Walsh, said Styles wasn't ready. But Cowell, a man who can reduce even the most confident wannabe into a pool of tears, saw something immediately. This kid had it.

The irony is, as much as Cowell was instantly smitten, he didn't think that Styles alone was enough. Then again, neither was Liam Payne, a determined teen from Wolverhampton who had auditioned for the show two years earlier and had now returned older and more confident. Nor was Niall Horan, the cheerful Irish guitarist. Or Louis Tomlinson, whose quick wit made him a natural television personality. Or Zayn Malik, whose brooding good looks and soulful vocals suggested a future R&B star.

Each of these five young men had auditioned as a solo act, and each was eliminated before reaching the finals. Then, in one of the most consequential acts of improvisation in 21st-century pop music, the panel of judges decided that this might be a case where the sum was bigger than the individual parts. The five were combined into a group.

The mythology surrounding the creation of One Direction has grown with time. Footage released years later showed *The X Factor*'s judges debating which contestants might work well together. Nicole Scherzinger, a guest judge on the episode, has often been credited by fans as a key voice in suggesting the combination they would finally land on. On July 23, 2010, the group was born. Styles was reportedly the one to come up with the name.

At first, there was no reason to think the quintet would become one of the biggest pop acts of the 2010s. They didn't even win their season of the show. But throughout that season, One Direction steadily accumulated supporters. Their performances often emphasized puppy-dog enthusiasm over polish. They looked less like a carefully engineered bubblegum product than five boys who genuinely seemed delighted to be standing beside one another doing what they loved. Viewers saw that and responded. Fellow teens in particular saw something unusually accessible in the group's members. They were handsome but never intimidating. Funny rather than slick. Ambitious without appearing calculating.

At season's end, audiences were shocked when One Direction finished third. Bronze-tier contestants are usually quickly forgotten, an answer to a trivia-night question at the local pub. Instead, they quickly became the most successful act *The X Factor* had ever produced. Cowell immediately signed them to his label, Syco.

At the house of the show's judges in Spain. Opposite: X Factor *contestants Liam Payne and Harry Styles.*

The timing could not have been better. The music industry had been on the lookout for the next global youth phenomenon. The age of physical CDs was fading. Social media was fast becoming the primary engine of celebrity: Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, and later Instagram allowed fans unprecedented access to artists. One Direction arrived precisely when those technologies were transforming fandom from a passive experience into a more intimate and personal 24-7 connection.

Liam, Harry, Zayn, Louis, and Niall's first single, "What Makes You Beautiful," dropped in 2011 like a megaton bomb. The song was bright, simple and relentlessly catchy. It debuted at No. 1 in Britain and introduced a formula that would define much of the group's early success: guitar-driven pop that felt youthful without seeming childish. Two months later, the group's debut album, *Up All Night*, followed. So did the siren song coming from the other side of the Atlantic—the same one that had beckoned to four Liverpudlians named John, Paul, George, and Ringo nearly 50 years earlier.

This latest British invasion was never going to be a surefire thing. After all, there was already a long history of U.K. boy bands that had tried—and failed—to parlay their domestic popularity into chart-topping success in the States. Even megastars such as Take That had failed to replicate their British success in the former colonies. But One Direction would succeed where their predecessors had stumbled.

In 2012, *Up All Night* became the first debut album by a British group to enter the Billboard 200 at No. 1. Suddenly, One Direction weren't just successful, they were historic. And they were just getting started. The group's concert tickets vanished within minutes of going on sale. Shopping malls became scenes of hormone-fueled riots. Fans screamed so loudly at One Direction concerts that the music often became secondary to the noise. It felt like a return to the one-two-punch early days of *NSYNC and Backstreet Boys. But it also felt different. There was nothing that felt craven or corporate about One Direction.

The fandom was so intense and passionate that the group's swooning followers soon acquired their own identity. They called themselves "Directioners." As with Beatlemania, the devotion to these lovable lads often baffled outsiders. Yet it represented something that was culturally significant. Directioners transformed social media fandom into an organized force that rallied against gossip and rumors with ardent defenses of the band members. The fans' emotional investment turned One Direction into more than a Billboard-friendly musical act. It became a community.

Meanwhile, the boys got busy in the studio, working at such a feverish clip that you wondered if they'd been reading up on the historically short shelf lives of most boy bands. Between 2011 and 2015, they would release five studio albums: *Up All Night, Take Me Home, Midnight Memories, Four,* and *Made in the A.M.* The first four arrived alongside massive global tours, countless promotional appearances and television performances, and endless interviews that were dissected like the Dead Sea Scrolls by fans looking for revelations between the lines. (They did not tour with *Made in A.M.* because they went on hiatus shortly thereafter.)

ONE DIRECTION QUICKLY BECAME A DOMINANT ENTERTAINMENT BRAND, WITH *FORBES* ESTIMATING THEIR 2015 EARNINGS AT $130 MILLION.

The group's schedule was exhausting, but the hard work was paying off. One Direction quickly became a dominant entertainment brand, with *Forbes* estimating their earnings at roughly $130 million in 2015 alone, placing them in the ranks of the highest-paid music acts in the world. Touring would generate even more money. Their 2014 Where We Are Tour grossed more than $290 million and ranked among the highest-grossing tours in music history at the time. There were One Direction fragrances, books, branded merchandise, and even movies.

In 2013, director Morgan Spurlock filmed the concert documentary, *One Direction: This Is Us*. The movie functioned partly as fan service and partly as a pop-culture time capsule, snaring a moment when it seemed like the group's popularity

Performing "Kids in America" on The X Factor Live *in 2010.*

Niall
u Sexy
Beast!
LOUIS
you make us
LOL!
I love you...
HARRY
xxx
PHWOAAAR...
ZAYN
YOU'RE
LUSH!
LIAM

Zayn, Harry, Louis, Liam, and Niall hammed it up as fans outside Fountain Studios in London in 2010.

couldn't get any bigger. It portrayed the members as hardworking, overwhelmed, and frequently astonished by their own success. For fans, it confirmed what they already believed. For skeptics, it finally gave a sense of the scale of the phenomenon.

During these years, Styles seemed to increasingly emerge as the band's unspoken spokesman. At first, he was simply the toussled-hair favorite. But as One Direction matured musically, Styles evolved into a more distinctive performer. His confidence grew, his vocals got stronger, and his fashion choices grew bolder. Although it would have been sacrilegious for a fan to say something so heretical out loud (or online), in retrospect, Styles appeared to be the one best positioned for a future beyond the group.

And yet One Direction's success depended on the chemistry between its five members. Payne often functioned as a stabilizing presence. Malik brought vocal sophistication and cool detachment. Horan projected warmth and relatability. And Tomlinson supplied the merry-prankster humor and energy. Still, Styles seemed to be the one who delivered the most star power and charisma.

In time, the band's biggest songs became defining pop records of the 2010s. Singles like "What Makes You Beautiful," "Live While We're Young," and "Best Song Ever" dominated radio and streaming platforms while also helping the group transition from teen idols into a more mature mainstream act. That transition began in earnest with 2013's *Midnight Memories,* an album that nodded to rock influences and demonstrated a desire to grow beyond the boy-band straitjacket. The group's songs began to incorporate bigger guitars, bigger choruses, and a slightly rougher sound. Even critics who had initially dismissed One Direction began to acknowledge that the group possessed greater

Clip Bait

The half-life of Harry Styles' *X Factor* audition tape.

BY ABBY ROSE NOTARNICOLA

It's a good thing the audition went well. In 2010, when *The X Factor*'s U.K. production crew filmed Harry Styles' tryout and posted it to the show's YouTube page, the 16-year-old had no way of knowing that the recording would become a forever artifact, circulating online for years like a chunk of digital titanium. The video, in which Styles performed Stevie Wonder's R&B classic "Isn't She Lovely," would pop up randomly in fans' feeds, in TikTok edits, Instagram reels, and YouTube shorts, much like clips of other crooners who've grown up in the online era, including a 13-year-old Justin Bieber (singing Chris Brown's "With You"); Christina Aguilera, age 12 (covering Whitney Houston's "I Have Nothing"); and a 7-year-old Beyoncé (belting out "Home" from the musical *The Wiz*).

Enthusiasm for Styles' audition clip (and Styles himself, of course) was so sustained, *The X Factor* released extended versions of not only Styles' audition, but also those of his One Direction bandmates, as part of a tribute to One Direction in 2022. Just how popular was Harry? His six-minute segment earned 8 million views—slightly less than the total number of views for the other four members together.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the extra minutes of Styles film produced some viral moments. The first was an exchange between the future star and *X Factor* judge Simon Cowell where the two bantered about pastry sales at the bakery where Styles was working at the time: "The Viennese fancy is always a favorite. Millionaire shortbread—big seller," the contestant told the judges. Another internet-breaker, at least for the "Harries," was never-before-seen footage of Styles at the start of his audition, when he performed "Hey, Soul Sister" by Train, only to be cut off mid-performance by Cowell, who requested another song because Styles was out of tune. "*The X Factor* UK blessed One Direction fans with an extended cut of Styles' audition tape," gushed People.com.

Styles' increasing fame has only fueled his fans' nostalgia for the earliest days of his career, dubbing them "Fetus Harry," a reference to the time between Styles' *X Factor* audition and when One Direction released their first album, *Up All Night,* in 2011. Online fan edits continuously circulate with images and video compilations from this time, and many have more than half a million views. "Fetus Harry Styles" continues to get hundreds of thousands of views between YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok.

A guest performance on the American **X Factor** *Season 2 finale in 2012.*

musical ambition than they'd expected.

By the middle of the decade, One Direction was arguably the world's biggest band. By then, they'd sold more than 50 million records. But their enormous—and enormously rapid—success created a lot of pressure, inside and outside of the group. Their personal lives became tabloid fodder. Fans scrutinized their social media activity. And Styles' relationships with Taylor Swift and Kendall Jenner generated insane levels of media attention.

The constant, fast-paced grind of album, tour, album, tour, album, tour would create a metabolism that was next to impossible to maintain. Years later, in interviews, the group's members would describe exhaustion and burnout. The machine that had made them famous and fabulously wealthy young men was becoming increasingly difficult to sustain.

The first sign of trouble would arrive in March 2015, when Malik abruptly left One Direction, right in the middle of the On the Road Again Tour. Fans were stunned by the announcement. Official statements emphasized stress and a desire for a more private life. For his part, Malik later spoke about feeling unhappy within the band and creatively constrained by its musical direction. "I completely selfishly wanted to be the first person to go and make my own record," Malik would admit years later on the *Call Her Daddy* podcast. "We'd been together every day for five years, and we'd got sick of each other, if I'm being completely honest."

For many Directioners, the departure seemed unimaginable. One Direction had always been painted as a brotherhood. Suddenly, one brother was gone. The remaining members pressed forward, completing the tour. Then they returned to the studio and recorded what would become *Made in the A.M.* Publicly, they presented a united front. Privately, however, it was becoming increasingly clear that the group couldn't go on for much longer at the same grueling pace.

The dynamics of One Direction seemed to constantly be shifting. Styles was attracting growing attention from Hollywood movie studios and Parisian fashion houses. Solo careers seemed inevitable. By 2015, buzz about an impending hiatus was impossible to ignore. Entertainment reporters treated even the vaguest and most anodyne comments as breaking news. Then, finally, confirmation came. That August, the group announced that it would take an extended break following *Made in the A.M.* Their representatives emphasized that the hiatus was temporary; this was simply a pause.

As 2016 approached, One Direction's future came into sharper focus as each member sought their own opportunities. Horan began working on

Liam Payne 1993–2024

Payne, one of One Direction's standout singers, died in October 2024 after falling from a hotel balcony in Buenos Aires while intoxicated. Like the other members of the best-selling boy band, Payne had pursued a solo career after One Direction, exploring pop, R&B, and electronic music. He had several hits, including "Strip That Down" (2017) and "For You" (2018), a collaboration with Rita Ora. After Payne's death, his former bandmates remembered him as a good friend and a positive influence. "Liam had an energy for life and a passion for work that was infectious," said Niall Horan. The sentiment was echoed by Harry Styles in an interview with Apple Music: "I saw someone with the kindest heart who just wanted to be great."

his own material, Payne pursued collaborations, and Tomlinson moved toward television and songwriting projects. As for Styles, he would launch a solo career while also exploring acting. One Direction was now splitting off in new directions. The group's official hiatus began in January 2016.

The reaction among fans was as emotional as expected, if not even more so. Social media became a communion of grief, denial, and hope. Some treated the news like the end of a romantic relationship. Others waited, and waited, for reunion announcements. Millions of people publicly wrestled with processing the vanishing of a key part of their adolescence. The intensity of that reaction reflected what One Direction had represented.

Back in 2010, the group had arrived during a unique moment in the pop culture zeitgeist. Unlike previous boy bands, they existed in constant conversation with their audience. Now, six years later, those very same communities experienced

Niall, Liam, Louis, and Harry at the 2015 American Music Awards in Los Angeles.

something akin to collective heartbreak. Yet Styles continued to show that he was more than just a one-trick pop pony. On his own, he was free to follow whatever gave him inspiration, whether it was pop, classic rock, or Bowie-esque glam aesthetics.

Rather than minimizing what One Direction had achieved, Styles' next chapter would solidify the group's hot house of talent. After all, not long before, the members of the biggest pop group on the planet had just been five teenagers auditioning for a televised talent show. And those five teenagers would win by losing, then joining forces and creating one of the defining musical acts of the 2010s, reviving the boy-band genre for a new generation. Because for one brief, shining, infectiously danceable moment, One Direction seemed less like a band than five separate dreams that collided in exactly the right place, at precisely the right moment, and became something larger than any of them could ever have imagined. ☐

One Direction’s Best Songs

The boy band was only together for about six years, but they made the most of it, with multiple Billboard Hot 100 hits.

BY ABBY ROSE NOTARNICOLA

One Direction’s debut album, *Up All Night,* was released in 2011 and captured the hearts of fans across the globe. It not only soared to the top of the charts (along with *The Wanted,* from the Irish-British group The Wanted), it helped spur a new era of boy bands. Four out of five of One Direction’s albums hit No. 1 on the Billboard 200, and individual songs dominated the airwaves. Here’s a look at 1D’s highest-ranking Billboard Hot 100 hits.

“WHAT MAKES YOU BEAUTIFUL” (2012)

One Direction’s debut single, “What Makes You Beautiful,” from *Up All Night,* reached No. 4 in the U.S. and No. 1 in the U.K. in 2012. Cowritten by Savan Kotecha, a vocal producer on *The X Factor,* the song was inspired by an exchange Kotecha had with his wife in a London hotel, when she expressed insecurity about her looks. In recent years, some fans have taken issue with how “What Makes You Beautiful” conflates low self-esteem with desirability, but following its release, the tune stayed on the Billboard Hot 100 for 34 weeks and since then has gone on to almost 2 billion Spotify streams.

“LIVE WHILE WE’RE YOUNG” (2012)

Overtaking “What Makes You Beautiful” on the charts, “Live While We’re Young,” from 1D’s sophomore album, *Take Me Home,* was embraced for its celebration of youth and YOLO energy. In the video for the song, the band members are at a camping party, playing soccer, driving fast down dirt roads, and having water-gun fights while also inviting girls to join their fun and dance the night away.

“ONE WAY OR ANOTHER (TEENAGE KICKS)” (2013)

To raise money for the charity Comic Relief, One Direction produced a mash-up of “One Way or Another,” iconic band Blondie’s homage to perseverance, and The Undertones’ “Teenage Kicks,” about young love, then released the song as a self-taped music video on the 25th anniversary of Red Nose Day, Comic Relief’s annual fundraiser. Having donated their video budget, 1D recorded themselves in hotel rooms and airport terminals, on the streets of London, New York, and Japan, and singing with kids in Africa who would benefit from the funds. The effort raised more than 2 million British pounds, and the song hit No. 13 on the Billboard Hot 100.

“BEST SONG EVER” (2013)

A classic anthem filled with power chords and electric guitar riffs, “Best Song Ever” is known for Harry Styles’ rasp and the group’s newfound edge, expressed in lyrics such as “Said I had a dirty mouth/But she kissed me like she meant it” and the wailing “Ow!” that punctuated the lines: “Maybe it’s the way she walked (Ow!)/ Straight into my heart and stole it/ Through the doors and past the guards (Ow!)” It was the start of 1D embracing a more mature sound, and it peaked at No. 2 on the charts.

“STORY OF MY LIFE” (2013)

Off One Direction’s third album, *Midnight Memories,* “Story of My Life” represented another shift in the group’s material. Rather than focusing on romance and physical attraction, the song explored the hardships of love and loss and suggested folk rock rather than straight teenybopper pop. It was also the only track on *Midnight Memories* for which all five band members received writing credits, suggesting to their fans that Niall, Liam, Louis, Zayn, and Harry were growing up hand in hand.

“DIANA” (2013)

The title of this hit may at first suggest that One Direction recorded it to honor Princess Diana, who died in 1997, but the song is actually about isolation, with the group offering its help and support through the lyrics: “You’ve been lonely, you don’t even know me/But I can feel you crying/Diana, let me be the one to/Lift your heart up and save your life.” The ode reached No. 11 on the charts and was praised on social media by fellow rising star Justin Bieber, who tweeted, “that new 1d song diana is well written well done boyzzzzz.”

“MIDNIGHT MEMORIES” (2013)

A pop-rock jam about partying into the night, “Midnight Memories” is filled with heavy drumbeats and screeching vocals and is the title track from the chart-topping same-name album. Appropriately, “Midnight Memories” came together in the afterhours of touring, on buses and in hotel rooms, with writing help from *The X Factor* producer Julian Bunetta. Niall, Liam, Louis, Zayn, and Harry contributed lyrics to 11 out of the 14 tracks on the album, with “Midnight Memories” (the song) reaching No. 12 on the Billboard Hot 100.

In 2013, the band presented Selena Gomez with best pop video at the VMAs for "Come and Get It."

"STEAL MY GIRL" (2014)

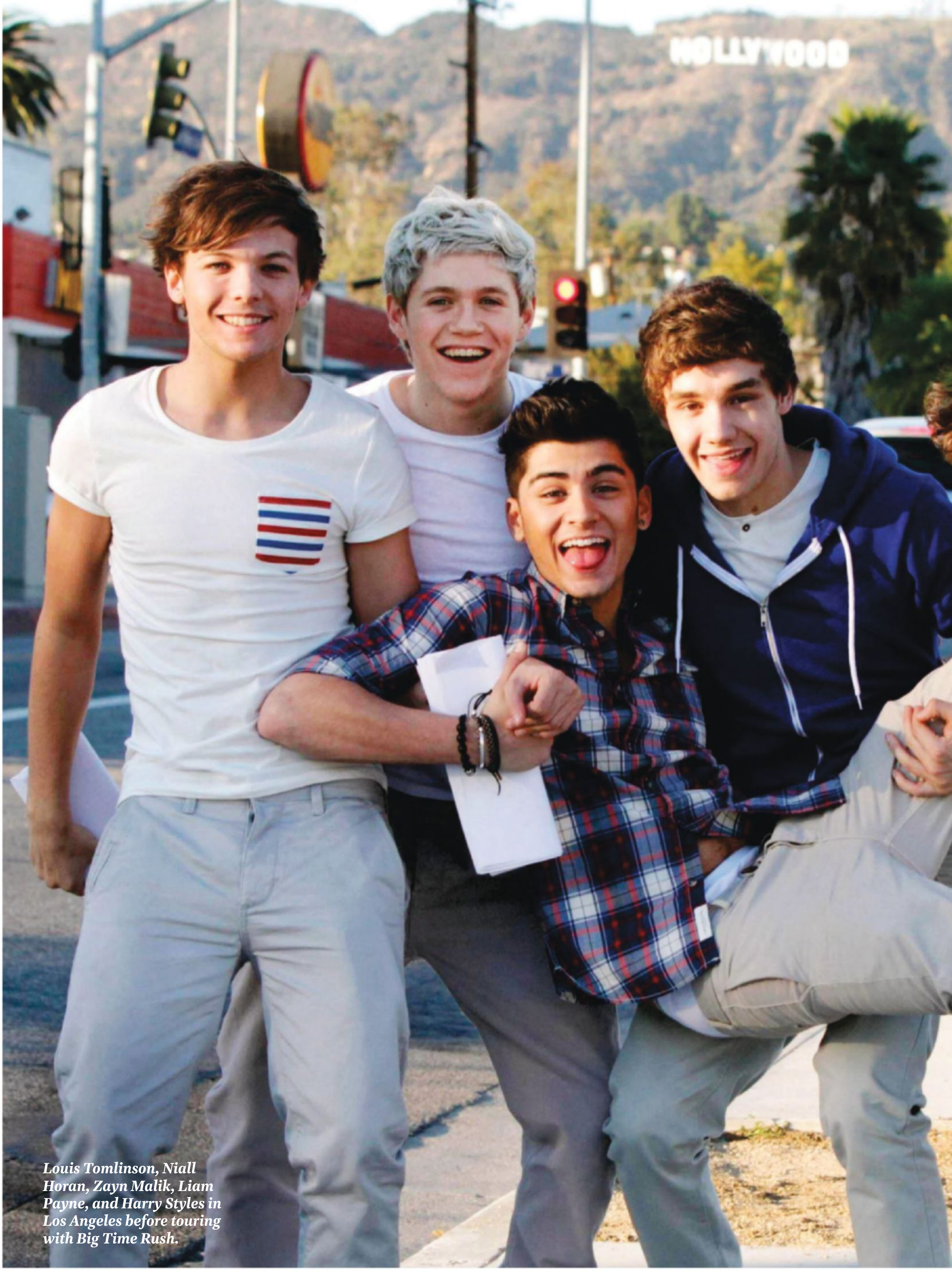
When Zayn tweeted the name of the first single from the band's fourth album, *FOUR, comments from* fans flooded in, with users leaving remarks such as, "FOUR IS GONNA BE A PROPER MASTERPIECE ZAYN I CAN'T WAIT FOR STEAL MY GIRL." The song set the mood for the album with its mellow tone, longing lyrics, and piercing chorus: "Douple million in the whole wide world/Find another one because she belongs to me." More than a decade later, "Steal My Girl" remains the sixth most listened to 1D song on Spotify, with almost 1.3 billion streams.

"DRAG ME DOWN" (2015)

Both One Direction and the band's fans were shaken by Zayn's announcement in March 2015 that he was leaving the band, and when "Drag Me Down" was released that July, many inferred that the song was a comment on the split. But on *Capital Breakfast Show,* Louis lightheartedly dismissed the idea, insisting that the tune was about "just saying no one can drag you down, you'll be all right, don't worry—as long as we're with each other, that's all right." In the video, which scored 1D its third consecutive music video award at the BRIT Awards (the U.K.'s equivalent of the Grammys), Niall, Liam, Louis, and Harry explored Houston's Johnson Space Center before launching into space.

"PERFECT" (2015)

The second single off of *Made in the A.M.,* One Direction's final album, "Perfect" recalls the band's pop roots with its upbeat tempo, steady snares, and flashing synths. In the song's chorus, Harry declares that he'd be a "perfect" candidate for a carefree relationship based on fun and spontaneity, a storyline that many fans believed was a clear reference to his former girlfriend, Taylor Swift, based on the lyrics: "And if you're looking for someone to write your breakup songs about/Baby I'm perfect." Harry brushed off those rumors, but the track still became a fan favorite, ranking as One Direction's fifth most listened to song on Spotify.



Louis Tomlinson, Niall Horan, Zayn Malik, Liam Payne, and Harry Styles in Los Angeles before touring with Big Time Rush.

ANOTHER BRITISH INVASION?

In 2012, as One Direction was blowing up and America falling hard for the band, TIME wondered about their influence and staying power.

BY STEPHANIE ABRAHAMS

IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHO ONE DIRECTION is, you don't know many 15-year-old girls. The newest British import consists of five impeccably coiffed English and Irish lads (Niall Horan, 18; Zayn Malik, 19; Liam Payne, 18; Harry Styles, 18; and Louis Tomlinson, 20) who were individual contestants on the British TV talent show *The X Factor* in 2010. After Nicole Scherzinger, a guest judge, suggested they perform together, they did—and came in a shrug-inducing third place. But *X Factor* producer/judge Simon Cowell immediately signed the group to his label and whisked them into the recording studio with producers who have created hits for Britney Spears, Lady Gaga, and the Backstreet Boys. The result? One Direction became the first U.K. group to debut at No. 1 with their album *Up All Night*. Not even the Beatles or the Rolling Stones can claim that honor.

ARE THEY OVERRATED?

Up All Night may have debuted at the top of the Billboard chart, but it sold less than 200,000 copies its first week. That's paltry when compared to other

With fans outside the MTV Video Music Awards in 2012. Opposite: The band joined the Saturday Night Live *cast in "The Manuel Ortiz Show," a skit that parodied Spanish-language daytime talk TV, in 2012.*

boy bands' takes: the Backstreet Boys' *Millennium* sold more than a million copies in its first week in 1999; *NYSNC's *No Strings Attached* sold 2.4 million a year later. Without last decade's pre-iTunes sensibility combined with battling boy bands competing for teenage girls' hearts—and fueling album sales—One Direction isn't likely to come close.

Sure, each One Direction song follows some version of the tried-and-true boy band formula: Start sparse, alternate solos, then build into a foot-tapping hook backed by pulsating electronic beats. But unlike the Wanted, another recently popular British group, who pen some of their own songs, these guys are not writers. And they don't even dance in the pleasure-inducing choreographed unison that first put New Kids on the Block on the map.

ARE THEY UNDERRATED?

Still, their appeal is undeniable. When One Direction made their first U.S. public appearance at Boston's Natick Mall on March 4, more than 5,000 screaming fans descended on the complex. A week later, they drew enormous crowds when they performed on the *Today* show—mostly teenage girls who had skipped school to be there, which means their parents had skipped work to be there, too. The group

takes its cues from the boy bands of yesteryear with bubblegum lyrics about young love—"The way you flip your hair gets me overwhelmed" they croon in their breakout single, "What Makes You Beautiful"—which any parent can get behind. It's a far cry from a typical Nicki Minaj verse.

And they look the part of a classic contemporary boy band, albeit one that's on the young side. (None of them needs to shave anytime soon.) Each member has his own shtick: Horan is the "cute little Irish one," Malik is the "quiet and mysterious one," Payne is "the sensible one," Styles is "the charming one," and Tomlinson is "the funny one." They like to wear T-shirts. They frolic on the beach. And they can most certainly sing—as 87 million YouTube views would probably attest to.

Though the single may not have deserved its win over Adele's "Someone Like You" at the BRIT Awards, "What Makes You Beautiful" is endlessly playable—just as catchy as "Everybody (Backstreet's Back)" and "Bye Bye Bye" from the boy band heyday. Just try not dancing to the title track, "Up All Night." They even showcase a different side with "I Want," which the target demographic may never download but which has been compared to the best of Queen's Freddie Mercury. No one ever said that about a 98 Degrees song.

THE VERDICT?

Even if One Direction's popularity is a sign of a new boy band resurgence, we doubt we'll regress all the way back to 1999. Still, the group has the makings—and the support—to be on the music scene for years to come. Frankly, they seem so earnest, it's hard not to root for them. Maybe we shouldn't even worry about the boy band distinction and instead compare the group to a different kind of pop star. The last artist to have such a combination of talent, aw-shucks youth appeal, and music industry backing was none other than Justin Bieber. One Direction is poised to fill the vacuum he'll create as he undergoes his own Justin Timberlake–esque growth from teen wonder to adult artist. Even Bieber realizes this: Niall Horan announced yesterday that he and Justin had been in the studio together. Like it or not, this boy band is here to stay. Let the screaming begin. ☐

THE BOY BAND BLUEPRINT

1960

1. THE BEATLES
The lads from Liverpool set off a global merchandising frenzy that included a Flip Your Wig game, lunch boxes, figurines, serving trays, and thimbles.

1961

2. THE BEACH BOYS
With their intricate vocal harmonies, the five SoCal musicians changed the sound of pop, none as notably as lead singer Brian Wilson, who wrote most of the band's hits.

1964

3. BAY CITY ROLLERS
The Scottish rockers were called "tartan teen sensations" and constantly compared to the Beatles but never transitioned out of boy band mode.

1965

4. THE JACKSON 5
How successful were the brothers from Gary, Indiana? In the mid '80s, Michael Jackson outbid Paul McCartney for the publishing rights to more than 200 Beatles songs.

1965

5. THE MONKEES
Four young performers chosen from a cattle call to play musicians on a cotton-candyish TV series ended up becoming a bona fide phenomenon.

The formula is tried and true: Put together a group of attractive young men—singing and dancing skills preferred, but not required—hire the right coaches, and practice, practice, practice. Then head for the recording studio and impress.

6

7

8

9

1977

6. MENUDO

Members were cycled out when their voices changed or they got too old. Menudo had more than 30 members total, but the only solo star was Ricky Martin.

1978

7. NEW EDITION

The R&B group from Roxbury, Massachusetts—childhood friends, including Bobby Brown— hoped to succeed the Jackson 5 (thus the name New Edition).

1984

8. NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

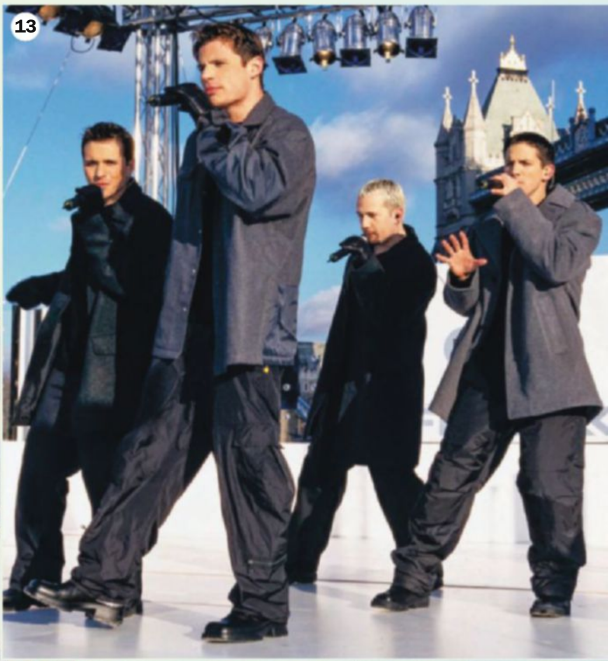
Another group of Massachusetts homeboys, NKOTB originally went by the name Nynuk. The most famous alum is actor/producer Donnie Wahlberg.

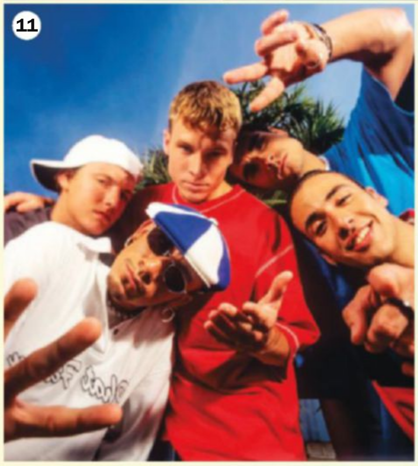
1985

9. BOYZ II MEN

The four Philadelphians took their name from the New Edition song "Boys to Men" but developed their own sound, sometimes called hip-hop doo-wop.

10


13


11

12

14

1992

10. HANSON

The brothers from Tulsa—Isaac, Taylor, and Zac—are best remembered for their infectious earworm "MMMBop," which hit in 1997 when they were all still teens.

1993

11. BACKSTREET BOYS

Along with *NSYNC, this chart-topping boy band was created by Orlando impresario Lou Pearlman, who later went to prison for fraud.

1995

12. *NSYNC

On their first release day, for *No Strings Attached,* *NSYNC sold 1.2 million copies—the record for the single largest sales week for an album, a milestone they held until 2015.

1996

13. 98 DEGREES

The big success story here was Nick Lachey, who broke into reality TV with MTV's *Newlyweds* with then wife Jessica Simpson before hosting NBC's *The Sing-Off.*

1997

14. BBMAK

Their breakout song, "Back Here," initially made a bigger splash in the U.S. than in their native England. Unlike many other boy bands, BBMak wrote their own music.

17
AWARDS
2011
MasterCard
live it Real

2005

15. JONAS BROTHERS

The squeaky-clean image of New Jersey siblings Joe, Nick, and Kevin was sugarcoated, said Joe, who later admitted to using marijuana.

2009

16. BIG TIME RUSH

They were famous for their catchy hooks and Nickelodeon show about four hockey-playing high school friends who move to L.A. and become a chart-topping boy band.

2009

17. THE WANTED

Members of this British group competed with more than 1,000 hopefuls before being chosen as winners. *The Wanted Life* on E! drew 1.7 million viewers.

2010

18. ONE DIRECTION

The band's audition process from *The X Factor* is legendary. All five competed as solo artists on the show but were advised they'd be better off as a group act.

2010

19. BTS

The seven members of BTS have become global ambassadors of Korean pop culture across the world, not just in music but also drama, beauty, and food.

Coachella, Indio, California, 2022.

STEPPIN' OUT

When One Direction went their separate ways, the question was, who would be the breakout star? The release of *Harry Styles* in 2017 provided the answer.

GOING IT ALONE

When One Direction went on hiatus in 2016, Styles decided to see if he could make it as a solo artist. (The answer, clearly, was yes.)

BY KAYTI BURT

YOU MIGHT SAY THAT HARRY STYLES' solo career started with Zayn Malik's abrupt 2015 decision to leave One Direction at a moment when the band was one of the most popular musical acts on the planet. Malik's departure led to 1D deciding to go "on hiatus"—a pause that turned out to be permanent—which in turn prompted each of the members to try careers on their own, Styles included.

The splintering had plenty of precedent in the boy band universe, but finding solo acts who eclipse their original group can be hit or miss. None of the New Kids on the Block had mega solo careers, nor did any of the Boyz II Men. Post-Menudo, only Ricky Martin went global; post New Edition, Bobby Brown was nominated for two Grammys, winning one; and from *NYSNC, only Justin Timberlake sang on. So while Styles had long been singled out as the One Directioner with the most star power, success was hardly guaranteed. Off the bat as a solo artist, Styles had the benefit of an established fan base, industry support (leaving a U.K. management firm to sign on with Jeff Azoff, a friend and the son of American music mogul Irving Azoff), and more creative authority than he did as one-fifth of a teenaged boy band. While he sometimes "felt very alone all of a sudden," he told *The Sunday Times Magazine*, he quickly landed a deal with Columbia Records and a feature film role in Christopher Nolan's war epic *Dunkirk*. The stage was set for the launch of Harry Styles' solo career.

SIGN OF THE TIMES

With the prerelease of "Sign of the Times" in April 2017, Styles signaled that this was not going to be a One Direction, business-as-usual sound. The slow, piano-driven rock ballad off his debut album, *Harry Styles,* started as a seven-minute voice note on Styles' phone, and it was unlike anything the artist had sung in his band days. It evoked 1970s David Bowie and 1990s Oasis and impressed critics—

At Radio City Music Hall in 2017.

"Embraces epic arena rock on the way to launching the One Directioner's solo career," opined *The Atlantic*—even if it didn't dominate the charts the way Malik's "Pillowtalk" and "Mind of Mine" had.

Perhaps most important, "Sign of the Times" reflected Styles' wish to be seen as a mature artist looking to offer comfort to listeners in a moment of uncertainty. "Yeah, I think we were thinking about—there's a lot of bad stuff going on in the world," the singer told NPR in 2017. "And it's not the last time that we will be in a place like that. I think the way that we receive information all the time now, it's really difficult to ignore that stuff—and I think it would have been weird for me to write an album and not acknowledge that there's anything bad going on in the world. And I think we were writing it from a place of—you have five minutes to say, 'It's going to be all right.'"

He drove home the point in the "Sign of the Times" music video, where he literally took flight, soaring over the picturesque countryside of Scotland's Isle of Skye in a Gucci coat, a knit sweater, and skinny jeans. The video ended with Styles disappearing into the clouds like a superhero. At the time, *USA Today* joked that the singer was "auditioning to be Marvel Comics next superhero or in a new biblical epic," but the observation wasn't far off. Styles would go on to appear as the Marvel Cinematic Universe's godlike character Eros in 2021's *Eternals*.

THE DEBUT ALBUM

"Sign of the Times" was an example of Styles toggling between the thrill of creativity and the weight of expectation. "I was trying to explore what music I would make by myself, but in that moment, I felt there were a lot of people who had put faith in me, and I didn't want to disappoint people or let them down," he told the *Sunday Times Magazine* in 2026.

He wrote much of the music during a two-month trip to Jamaica, where he worked to find his voice away from others who would influence him. "It was really important to me that the only voice really was mine," Styles told NPR. "I felt like if I stayed around places where I knew I was going to have people tell me what they think it should be . . . I knew I was just going to get distracted and frustrated."

Like "Sign of the Times," the other nine tracks on the *Harry Styles* album nodded to the eras of rock Styles had grown up listening to, while still sounding contemporary. "A lot of my influences, and the stuff that I love, is older," he told *Rolling Stone*. "So the thing I didn't want to do was, I didn't want to put out my first album and be like, 'He's tried to re-create the '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s. Loads of amazing music was written then, but I'm not saying I wish I lived back then. I wanted to do something that sounds like me. I just keep pushing forward."

Thematically, *Harry Styles* drew from the artist's personal life, with references to failed relationships, enduring bonds, and low-stakes flirtation. "I didn't want to write 'stories,' " he told *Rolling Stone*. "I wanted to write my stories, things that happened to me. The number-one thing was I wanted to be honest. I hadn't

Styles revved up the audience at Music Hall of Williamsburg in Brooklyn in 2020. Opposite: He paid homage to Elton John at the Casamigos Halloween party in Beverly Hills in 2018.

done that before."

The personal approach, he admitted, made him nervous—"I mean, I've never done this before. I don't know what the f— I'm doing"—but he also said it made him happy, and that he was gratified to find musicians to work with where he could be vulnerable enough to put himself out there. "I'm still learning," Styles continued in the *Rolling Stone* interview, "but it's my favorite lesson."

The creative vulnerability paid off. *Harry Styles* was the ninth best-selling album of 2017, selling more than a million copies worldwide.

BORN TO PERFORM

As a member of One Direction, Styles had routinely performed in front of tens of thousands of fans in sold-out stadiums around the world. But when it came to doing a solo tour, things felt a lot different. "The first couple of times on stage [without his One Direction bandmates], I'd think, 'What do I do with my hands?'" Styles told the *Sunday Times Magazine.*

He adjusted soon enough during Harry Styles: Live on Tour, the pop star's 2017–2018 concert series with 89 performances, which gave him time to adjust to stepping onto the stage alone. The early shows were booked into small venues, such as San Francisco's SF Masonic Auditorium, where Styles, in a custom floral suit, sang his heart out to an audience of just over 3,000.

For the tour's second half, in 2018, Styles sold out arena shows where he performed tracks from the *Harry Styles* album alongside solo interpretations of One Direction hits "What Makes You Beautiful" and "Stockholm Syndrome," as well as a cover of a song by one of his favorite bands, Fleetwood Mac's "The Chain."

"The tour, that affected me deeply," he told *Rolling Stone* in 2019. "It really changed me emotionally. Having people come to sing the songs. For me, the tour was the biggest thing in terms of being more accepting of myself, I think. I kept thinking, 'Oh wow, they really want me to be myself. And be out and do it.'"

Styles finished the Berlin Marathon in September 2025 in just under three hours. He registered under the pseudonym "Sted Sarandos" and ran in sunglasses and headband, but he was still recognized.

PUSHING CREATIVE BOUNDARIES

If the launch of Styles' solo career was to be a time of creative experimentation, it wouldn't end on the stage. The star stepped farther outside his comfort zone for his feature-film debut in Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk,* a historical drama based on the evacuation of 338,000 Allied soldiers from northern France during World War II. Styles played a British Army private who, like the rest of his infantry group, was panicked and frustrated under relentless aerial attack and was trying to find a way off the beach. "I started acting when I was younger, in school," Styles said at the *Dunkirk* premiere in July 2017. "I've always liked it and have always been a massive fan of movies. When I heard about this [film], I just wanted to be involved."

In casting the inexperienced soldier ensemble, Nolan was looking for young and/or unknown British actors. While Styles fit the former, he did not fit the latter—though Nolan did not know that. "I don't think I was that aware, really, of how famous Harry was," Nolan told the Associated Press. "I mean, my daughter had talked about him. My kids talked about him, but I wasn't really that aware of it. So the truth is, I cast Harry because he fit the part wonderfully and truly earned a seat at the table."

Styles took a five-month break from writing and recording his solo album to film *Dunkirk*. The role also required the singer to chop off his signature long locks.

At the time, Styles' choice to appear in a film may have seemed random, but it spoke to a commitment to push himself that defined his transition from boy band member to solo artist. "Yeah, it is scary," Styles told NPR in 2017 about being out on his own. "But I think it was time for me to be scared. And I'm still very much learning. And I'm having the time of my life working this out." ☐

LET’S ROCK

In its 2017 review of *Harry Styles*, TIME noted unexpected influences.

BY SAM LANSKY

On stage in Las Vegas in 2017.

It was always easy to dismiss One Direction. Formed on reality TV and cannily styled to appeal to young listeners, they had all the markings of a manufactured boy band. But by their fifth album, One Direction had become a stealth classic-rock delivery service, repackaging crunchy guitar riffs and soaring arena-ready choruses that went down easy with kids and reminded parents of their youth. In 2015, Zayn Malik left the band to top charts with sulky alt-R&B songs like “Pillowtalk,” a No. 1 hit in 2016. Now Harry Styles, the band’s de facto front man, is next to make a bid for solo stardom.

On Styles’ self-titled debut album, he eschews slick production and sharp hooks. But he still synthesizes influences from the last half-century of rock, so much so that you can practically travel through history on the back of his references. The anxious opener “Meet Me in the Hallway” has a riff straight out of Jefferson Airplane’s “White Rabbit,” while the operatic lead single “Sign of the Times” channels David Bowie. “Kiwi” is straight-up grunge, full of rage, and “Two Ghosts” sounds like late-’90s adult-contemporary radio, in the best way. Working with veteran producer Jeff Bhasker (Kanye West, Mark Ronson), Styles has crafted a grown-up rock sound that doesn’t pander.

Styles’ lyrics can be opaque, which makes the confessional final track, “From the Dining Table,” all the more important. It’s a vulnerable ode to the lonely hotel room, the curse of the famous. The song not only proves Styles’ talent as a storyteller but also shows that he may potentially be as good at looking inward as at looking backward in time.

AN ERA GONE TOO SOON

In 2022, a superfan welcomed *Harry’s House* but also lamented the pandemic-shortened shelf life of the beloved *Fine Line*.

BY ASHLEY BOUCHER

WITH THE RELEASE OF “AS IT WAS,” from Harry Styles’ third album, *Harry’s House,* HS3 is upon us—and it may never again be as it was during the delightful year of album No. 2, *Fine Line*.

Please bear with those of us Harries still processing the end of this singular era. We have been eulogizing it on TikTok for weeks, and now, with *Harry’s House,* the end is officially here.

It would be so sweet if things just stayed the same . . . but then we wouldn’t have new Harry music, would we?

Released in December 2019, Styles’ sophomore album only had a few months of pre-pandemic life. That early, blissful *Fine Line*–filled period included a delightful NPR Tiny Desk concert, a *Today* show sound check that launched many an Etsy shop, and what may have been the best performance of Lizzo’s “Juice” ever.

Then, of course, the world shifted, music was shut down, and, like every artist, Styles delayed his tour. When the music video for “Watermelon Sugar” dropped in May 2020, it was dedicated to touching during a time we were desperate for just that, and it quickly rose to song-of-the-summer status.

Styles received well-deserved Grammy nominations for best pop vocal album, best music video for “Adore You,” and best pop solo performance for “Watermelon Sugar” (he won for the latter). Even though longtime fans were left scratching their heads at that last one—there are certainly better songs on *Fine Line* (“TBSL” fans, I see you)—it was made up for by Styles’ shirtless performance when he opened the show in March last year.

When, after two delays, Love on Tour (LOT to Harries) finally kicked off in September 2021, it was nothing short of euphoric. Fans were fed almost nightly with videos shared on Twitter and TikTok, making it feel like we were all on tour together: *What trousers-suspenders combo will he wear tonight? What sage dating advice will he dole out? Whose sign will get the best reaction?!* Even if we didn’t make it to a concert, we were plugged into a community that was always willing to share videos, photos, and outfit ideas, to let new fans in—no matter if Harry’s ever-growing standom made tickets more and more difficult to come by.

For a while, it felt like the *Fine Line* age would never end. Sure, we’re all absolutely feral for new music, but we’d also be happy if he’d just release “Medicine” and “Anna” already. Perhaps we should have seen it coming. It was right there all along, in the lyrics of *Fine Line*’s first single. He told us he’s not ever going back; of course there’s nowhere to go but up and on.

“As It Was” dropped at midnight on April 1, 2022, in the U.K., meaning that over here in North America, we were blessed a day early—but also that the HS3 era is full steam ahead. Like many fans, I found my-

Dressed as Dorothy Gale (of Wizard of Oz fame) for the Harryween Fancy Dress Party at Madison Square Garden in 2021.

self getting emotional, looking back at videos from LOT and slowly accepting that it's time to move on. (Though it will thankfully live on a bit longer, as Styles will embark on the European leg of Love on Tour in June after headlining Coachella. But even after that, surely it will endure. Stevie Nicks anointed *Fine Line* his *Rumours*, after all.)

The new single's title is tinged with that nostalgia for the Great Before, and maybe that's part of why we clung so hard to *Fine Line*: It was one of the last pieces of art released before the pandemic. The album certainly carried me through quarantine; all five of my top songs on Spotify in 2020 were from *Fine Line*.

The title *Harry's House* immediately brings to mind lyrics from *Fine Line*'s "Canyon Moon," with their repeated promise of returning home. In his final show of the U.S. leg of LOT, Styles asked the crowd, "Are you ready to take it home?" Which feels poignant now.

The answer is yes, certainly—especially if it means more Harry. But upon arriving home, there's always that tinge of longing for the road, the magic we may never experience again. Feeling sorry that it's all over, wondering when we might be able to do it again. On that note, join us as we look back on some of the most beloved moments from the *Fine Line* era.

● **THE TINY DESK CONCERT** This intimate concert was the beginning of the "To Be So Lonely" fervor. "I'm just an arrogant son of a bitch who can't admit when he's sorry"—you said it, not us, Harry!

- **THE JW ANDERSON SWEATER** While on his press tour, Styles performed on *Today,* but it was his rehearsal for the performance that garnered the most attention. More specifically, it was what he wore for that rehearsal: a patchwork JW Anderson cardigan that launched hundreds of Etsy dupes and a crocheting craze among Harries.
- **THE LIZZO PERFORMANCE** In early 2020, Styles was brought out by Lizzo to help her close a show in Miami. Theirs is one of our favorite celeb friendships. (She later attended one of his Los Angeles concerts, and in an adorable moment, he tossed her his sunflower from the stage.) Watching their performance of "Juice" now, I'm reminded that this is when he was still wearing his pearls. Sigh.
- **THE ITALY MUSTACHE** It's July 2020. We're all tired of being stuck at home, and we're all sad that we can't see Styles in concert this summer like we planned. But what sneaks across our timelines? A photo of Styles looking like Mario and Luigi's hot younger brother. Bless.
- **THE JINGLE BALL 2020 SET** This is a slept-on performance if I've ever seen one. Filmed during the production of *Don't Worry Darling* (in which Harry played a suburban husband), the Jingle Ball set introduced us to some note changes we'd later hear on LOT that I'm still thirsting over.
- **THE HAYLOR REUNION** I'm throwing in this moment for myself and all the other Haylor fans. It's tough being a child of divorce!
- **ALL OF LOVE ON TOUR** But especially "Medicine" at Harryween.

It's no secret that Madison Square Garden is one of Styles' favorite places to perform. He celebrated Halloween with two shows at the iconic venue, dressed one night as Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz* and the other as Pierrot the clown—subtle and early hints, some fans have posited, at his next album title and the "As It Was" release date.

Phenomenal outfits aside, he performed "Medicine"—his most beloved song that he's never officially released. Will it finally appear on *Harry's House*? We're getting dizzy just thinking about it.

Honorable mentions include the iconic *Vogue* cover, his beat-up Vans showing up in the "Golden" music video, the surprise Phoebe Waller-Bridge appearance in the "Treat People with Kindness" music video, and the green feather boa.

Do you agree that *Fine Line* will endure? ☐

This story originally appeared on EW.com.

Styles and Lizzo dueted her hit "Juice." Below, from left: The JW Anderson sweater; Tiny Desk; virtual Jingle Ball.

NPR
Bob Boilen
Robin Hilton
All Songs Considered
npr

HARRY GOES HOLLYWOOD

At the same time Styles was forging a solo music career, he joined the ranks of singers hoping to make their mark on the silver screen.

BY KAYTI BURT

Styles, Aneurin Barnard, and Fionn Whitehead as Allied soldiers in the World War II epic Dunkirk, *directed by Christopher Nolan.*

FROM AL JOLSON TO ELVIS, DAVID BOWIE to Madonna, musical performers have been making the jump from the stage to the big screen for a century. When One Direction broke up in 2016, Harry Styles' schedule was his own, and he was free to choose how to spend his time as a solo artist. Unexpectedly, this included movies.

Styles had a bit of light acting under his belt—music videos and commercials he'd appeared in with One Direction, plus a cameo (with his mates) in an episode of the Nickelodeon series *iCarly* in 2012. But he had never taken on a serious film role, and for his debut, he swung for the fences, auditioning for Christopher Nolan, who was casting for *Dunkirk,* a film about the dramatic evacuation of more than 300,000 British troops from a French beach during World War II.

Told from the perspective of characters on land, sea, and air, the film starred Kenneth Branagh as a naval officer, Tom Hardy as an RAF pilot, and Mark Rylance as a civilian mariner, but Nolan was looking for some newcomers to cast in a handful of smaller yet crucial parts. It's hard to argue that Styles was unknown at the time (Nolan says he was aware of him, though not of the extent of his fame), but he definitely fell into the inexperienced category and, like the other promising hopefuls, auditioned live. Known or not, Styles impressed Nolan—he "fit the part wonderfully," the director told the Associated Press—and he tapped Styles to play Alex, a hotheaded grunt trying to make it off the beach alive. The choice was not unlike the one Nolan made in casting Heath Ledger in *The Dark Knight*, which had "raised a lot of eyebrows and caused a lot of comment," Nolan told *Entertainment Tonight,* adding that he has "to trust my instincts, and Harry was perfect for this part."

Styles' acting chops were good enough he was given what some reviewers described as two of the most important lines in the movie. In one extended, nerve-racking sequence, a group of Allied soldiers are trying to stay alive in a boat when it is hit by gunfire and flooded with water. To lessen the vessel's weight, Alex insists that a Frenchman—whom he wrongly accuses of being a spy—jump overboard, prompting a British soldier to argue that Alex is being unfair. Styles shoots him down with an observation that sums up the moral compromises made by people in danger: "Survival's not fair." And in another scene, later in the film, when an older man offers Styles and other survivors a blanket, congratulating them with a "well done, lads," Styles gets off another impactful line, responding, "All we did is survive." The performance achieved exactly what it was supposed to, Nolan told *Entertainment Weekly*: "It's not cartoonish. . . . He really taps into the reality of the situation. It's a subtle performance. "

Appearing on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* to promote the film, Styles described *Dunkirk* as "kind of the opposite to what a traditional movie set around war is. . . . It's not us being the heroes, and kind of going and saving the day. It's just about community heroism, and how these small acts from civilians and the normal people who are at home

coming to save us kind of together makes this massive thing. I think it's very much about the spirit of people, and when people come together, you can do incredible things."

Dunkirk made $549 million at the global box office, one of the highest-grossing World War II films ever. The film was nominated for eight Academy Awards and won three, for best sound editing, best sound mixing, and best film editing.

ETERNALS (2021)

While Styles' role in *Dunkirk* was widely publicized prior to the film's release, his role in the Marvel Cinematic Universe film *Eternals*, about a group of immortals who emerge from hiding after thousands of years, was kept strictly under wraps. Cast as Eros (aka Starfox), a character with the power to stimulate the pleasure centers of people's brains, Styles appeared only in the film's mid-credits sequence and was intended by director Chloé Zhao to take moviegoers unawares. "Harry as Eros was very much a package deal for me," Zhao told *Deadline*. "I'd kept tabs on Harry since *Dunkirk*, I thought he was very interesting. After meeting him, I realized he is that character."

Unfortunately, Zhao's surprise was spoiled by an American film critic who tweeted about it following the *Eternals* premiere in Los Angeles. And just as unfortunately, *Eternals*, starring Gemma Chan, Richard Madden, Kumail Nanjiani, Kit Harington, and Angelina Jolie, underwhelmed at the box office, so there was no MCU sequel, and Styles fans never got the opportunity to see the Eros character develop. Styles was gracious about the experience and complimented his director. "Who didn't grow up wanting to be a superhero, you know?" he told *Dazed* in 2021. "It was a great experience, and I'm so grateful to have gotten to work with Chloé."

DON'T WORRY DARLING (2022)

In 2022, Styles took on a more substantive role in the thriller *Don't Worry Darling*, set in a seemingly idyllic 1950s company town. Styles played Jack Chambers, and Florence Pugh was his loving wife, Alice, whose happiness begins to unravel when she questions the mysterious work Jack and the other men in the community are involved in.

Director Olivia Wilde's follow-up to *Booksmar*t, her coming-of-age comedy from 2019, *Don't Worry Darling* won media attention early on for all the wrong reasons. Shia LaBeouf, who had been slated to play Jack, and Dakota Johnson, who was supposed to be Margaret, a town resident, dropped out before filming started and were replaced respectively by Styles and KiKi Layne. There were alleged on-set clashes between Wilde and Pugh, and also between Styles and Chris Pine, who played Frank, a cultlike figure and founder of the company town. On top of all that, the press was keen for details on the romantic relationship between Wilde and Styles. The rumor mill churned on until the Venice International Film Festival, when the internet determined that Styles had spit on Pine, which Pine denied. "Harry did not spit on me. Harry's a very, very kind guy," he told *Esquire*.

Matters seemed to only get worse from there.

In My Policeman*, above. Opposite: In* Eternals *(left) and* Don't Worry Darling.

Critical response was mixed, with reviewers praising Pugh's performance but finding the script and Styles' performance lackluster. Many film pundits found Styles not yet up to the challenge of playing Jack, with Christy Lemire at RogerEbert.com writing, "As an actor, he's a terrific pop star. . . . The camera loves him. But when it comes time for him to summon the emotional depth he needs for his more intense scenes opposite Pugh, he's distractingly outmatched."

MY POLICEMAN (2022)

For his next film role, Styles signed on to the period drama *My Policeman*, a tragic love story between policeman Tom (Harry Styles) and a museum curator, Patrick (David Dawson). The two men meet in 1950s England and begin an affair, which continues for a time after Tom marries a schoolteacher, Marion (Emma Corrin). In their later years, the trio is reunited after Patrick has a stroke and Marion invites him into her home with Tom to recover. "I think the story's about wasted time, and that it's never too late to follow your heart and do what you want," Styles said at the film's L.A. premiere. "I hope that people take that away from it. It's never too late to follow your happiness and be brave in love."

The film was based on a 2012 novel written by Bethan Roberts, which was inspired by the real-life 40-year affair between author E.M. Forster and policeman Bob Buckingham. It was directed by Michael Grandage, who is known for his work as a theater director.

Speaking about working with Styles on *My Policeman*, Grandage told *Billboard*: "At no time did I ever feel I was working with any newcomer or beginner or novice. He's somebody who is adept at going out in front of thousands of people a night, and he knows that isn't just about walking out and going up to a microphone; it's about walking out and performing. All that happens when you take on a role like Tom Burgess. You just have to take all of those skills of trying to play to an audience and bring it into a very different arena. But he's got all the skills, Harry." ☐

INSIDE *HARRY'S HOUSE*

With his third studio album in 2022, Styles gave fans a peek into his day-to-day life—his wine tastes, breakfast go-tos, and more.

BY MAURA JOHNSTON

Who is Harry Styles?

Gallons of ink and billions of pixels have been spent trying to answer that question over the past 12 years, ever since the English singer first appeared on TV screens as a contestant on Britain's *The X Factor.* During that time, he's crisscrossed the globe as part of a boy band and as a solo artist, broken into acting, and established himself as one of the world's biggest boldface names. That he's somehow managed to retain an air of mystery through all of it—even as a phalanx of journalists and social media sleuths have attempted to dive into every aspect of his life—is a testament not just to his charm but to his modern-day savvy.

Now Styles is ready to let listeners into his home—or at least his 13-song representation of it. *Harry's House,* Styles' third album, is a pop record because of the stature of its star. But like its effervescent lead single, "As It Was," it gently nudges the expectations of what pop should sound like in 2022. It has the mood of a laid-back afternoon sifting through a friend's impeccably assembled if interestingly organized record collection, with the singer slyly dropping hints about his day-to-day —the maturation of his taste in wine, his breakfast order, his preferred party favors—over songs that share a vibe more than they do any one particular musical aesthetic.

"Music for a Sushi Restaurant," which opens the door to *Harry's House,* is a slippery, giddy slice of lite-funk that builds on the success of *Fine Line*'s "Watermelon Sugar." Styles scats and showcases his falsetto as he free-associates and declares, "I love you babe/In every kind of way," with blasts of brass further signifying his over-the-moonness. "Daydreaming" has a similar vibe, spinning out a vocal sample from the Brothers Johnson's 1978 cut "Ain't We Funkin' Now" into a post-rendezvous fever dream, Styles whooping and yelping with such fervor that his waving arms and big grin are rendered nearly visible.

Styles has put together an album that's so solid, even moments that would be cringeworthy if attempted by lesser pop stars feel earned. "Cinema"—a roller rink–appropriate come-on in which Styles beckons to a would-be lover with a simply stated "I just think you're cool"—rhymes "I bring the pop to the cinema" with "You pop when we get intimate" as its outro wiggles to a close. The wide-eyed hesitancy of the verses anticipates that tongue-tiedness when things get heated, and the result is charmingly humanizing—or at least as down-to-earth as a song that credits John Mayer as a session player can get.

Harry's House is also emotionally heavy at times, with Styles' understated delivery adding power to his plainspoken lyrics. "Matilda" is a gorgeously arranged acoustic ballad in which Styles offers comfort to the title character, whose childhood was marked by neglect and abuse; the vocal harmonies on the bridge imbue the song with a spiritual power, Styles reflecting his friend's internal

HARRY STYLES
Harry's House

Promoting **Harry's House** *at the* **Today Show's** *Citi Summer Concert Series at Rockefeller Plaza, 2022.*

strength back toward her. On "Boyfriends," a campfire sing-along about frustrating relationships, the vexations Styles sings about ("You love a fool who knows just how to get under your skin") never get resolved—but as anyone who's lived through them knows, merely talking about romance woes can bring some solace.

Since his first solo album, Styles has defied what post–boy band life should look like, creating his own space in the pop landscape. On *Harry's House,* he lets his guard down even further, digging into his musical curiosities while offering glimpses of his mind's workings and worries—and letting the world know he's going to navigate pop stardom on his own terms. **Grade: A-**

This story originally appeared on EW.com.

At Wembley Stadium in June 2026.

JOY ON VINYL

Kiss All the Time. Disco, Occasionally. references dance-punk, funk, and electro-pop but is also full of self-reflection and quiet moments.

BY MAURA K. JOHNSTON

One of the rare interviews Harry Styles gave in the weeks before his fourth album's release was in an unexpected place—the journal for running aficionados *Runner's World*. In conversation with the Japanese novelist and runner Haruki Murakami, Styles talked about how being scrutinized had led to him taking up the sport: "You are the observer once more, and you can go about your day in the most naked form. It's just you, alone, moving through the world," the newly minted marathoner shared.

KISS
ALL
THE
TIME.
DISCO, OCCASIONALLY.

Kiss All the Time. Disco, Occasionally. continues that idea of anonymous solitude in a crowded space. The former One Direction member spent the first chunk of the post-COVID lockdown period working nearly as tirelessly as he did during his *X Factor* days: His second solo headlining tour began in September 2021 and finished 22 months later, traveling to five continents along the way, while his 2022 full-length *Harry's House* won album of the year at the 2023 Grammy Awards and spawned still-ubiquitous songs like the glassy "As It Was."

When it was all over, Styles took a step back. "I was turning 30, and I wanted to take a break and assess," the singer told Apple Music's Zane Lowe shortly before the album's release. "I didn't want to just roll straight into another process of making something, and I thought it was time to, honestly, make sure I still loved [making music], in a lot of ways."

That sense of self-reflection is all over *Kiss All the Time*, which opens with a slow-growing keyboard burble that introduces the track "Aperture" and blossoms from there, with Styles acting less as a front man and more like a vibes merchant. "We belong together," the refrain of "Aperture" goes; the pulsing cut stretches over more than five minutes, Styles' feather-light voice eventually joined by a choir that echoes his declaration. While, Styles notes, an "aperture lets the light in," the light he wants to shine clearly isn't a spotlight as much as it is a widely cast beam that shines on a whole crowd, everyone made anonymous as they become one in movement.

Styles has said that *Kiss All the Time* was partially inspired by the joy he experienced seeing New York's elder dance-punk statesmen LCD Soundsystem in concert, and that influence is heard in snatches across the album. In addition to the sprawl of "Aperture," there's "Are You Listening Yet?," a jeering rebuke of his own early-2020s excess ("You keep forgetting your mantra, which thoughts you had on your own/Ignoring all of your friends at the end of their rope"), and "Ready, Steady, Go!," a sweaty flirtation pushed along by the sort of spiky bassline that was ubiquitous at downtown Manhattan clubs in the '00s. "Dance No More," meanwhile, is a slithering take on funked-up new wave, with Styles leading his choir in a call-and-response of the lament "DJs don't dance no more" before everyone exhorts the listener to "respect your mother"—in this case, the music that gets everyone to groove.

Elsewhere, Styles dabbles in other strains of 21st-century electropop. "American Girls" has the feel of piano-flecked mid-'10s EDM-pop, with Styles bemusedly ticking off his friends' couplings before letting his voice soar on the cavernous chorus, keeping his cards close even as he's singing each vowel sound with his full chest. "Taste Back" pairs biting feelings about an ex's return with glossy synths that root those bons mots in something like love. "The

Opening night at Wembley Stadium, June 2026.

Waiting Game" brings to mind the neatly manicured synth-pop that lit up indie-rock blogs in the pre-One Direction era; it's propelled by a metronomic beat and a tensely picked guitar, which only highlight Styles' frustration over someone whose in-the-moment excitement "all adds up to nothing." The skip-step "Pop," meanwhile, is a tangle of metaphors—it could be referencing Styles' squeaky-clean boy-band past, rock-star excess, untamed lust, or all three, plus some other things to add to the feeling of being "in over [his] head" that results in his brief explosions.

The dance floor glow that hangs over much of *Kiss All the Time* makes its quieter moments more potent. The glum reflection on fame "Paint by Numbers" is a slightly rote acoustic cut that provides a fulcrum for the songs where Styles grapples with fame. "Coming Up Roses" is a sweetly besotted ballad that sounds made for mirrorball-lit evenings, Styles' words seemingly tumbling out of his mouth—"Just for tonight, let's go hangover chasing," he says on the chorus before daring his date to "flirt with the bad ones and skip all the rest" alongside him—as strings and woodwinds surround him in a heart-shaped swirl. "Carla's Song," which closes the album, thrills to the idea of discoveries shared with a trusted friend (it was inspired by Styles playing some Simon & Garfunkel songs for the friend after whom the song is named), its insistent countermelodies adding an urgency to Styles' hope that listeners experience as much of the world as they can before it's too late.

"You've got to sit yourself down sometimes," he notes on "Season 2 Weight Loss," his voice a ghostlike presence amid analog synths and pounding drums. Styles has referred to this track as the album's mission statement; its title refers to the glow-ups some actors undertake after shows they're on become highly successful, only Styles is referring to his inner self-improvement and the anxieties that come along with it. "Holding, holding out/Hoping you will love me now," Styles sings, his voice gradually enveloped by the choir as he becomes more secure while moving through the world.

Kiss All the Time. Disco, Occasionally. documents what happens when someone whose celebrity is strong enough that he's recognizable on a first-name basis reverses the spotlight that's been trained on him for more than a decade. He becomes one with the crowd, a communion that puts his anxieties at bay for, at least, the duration of one more song.

TIME

Editor in Chief Sam Jacobs
Managing Editor Lily Rothman
Creative Director D.W. Pine

HARRY STYLES

People Inc. PREMIUM PUBLISHING
Vice President, Editor in Chief Kostya Kennedy
Creative Director Gary Stewart
Photo Director C. Tiffany Lee
Editorial Operations Director Jamie Roth Major
Editor Eileen Daspin
Art Director Ronnie Brandwein-Keats
Photo Editor Steph Durante
Writers Stephanie Abrahams, Ashley Boucher, Kayti Burt, Ella Piper Claffy, David Colman, Sophie Dodd, Peter Flax, Jed Gottlieb, Maura K. Johnston, Sam Lansky, Chris Nashawaty, Abby Rose Notarnicola
Manager, Editorial Operations Gina Scauzillo
Associate Manager, Editorial Operations Ariel Davis
Copy Chief Tracy Guth Spangler
Researcher Tresa McBee
Photo Assistant Nicoleta Papavasilakis
Production Designer Sandra Jurevics
Premedia Trafficking Supervisor Greg Fairholm
Premedia Imaging Specialist David Swain
Premedia Color Quality Analyst John Santucci
Production Director Patrick McGowan
Production Managers Ashley Schaubroeck, Trevi Jones, April Gross
Senior Quality Director Joe Kohler

Vice President & General Manager Jeremy Biloon
Executive Publishing Director Megan Pearlman
Senior Director, Brand Marketing Jean Kennedy
Associate Director, Brand Marketing Katherine Barnet
Associate Director, Business Development & Partnerships Nina Reed
Brand Manager, Brand Marketing Mia Rinaldi
Associate Brand Manager, Brand Marketing Gabby Amello

Special thanks Brad Beatson, Farah Ameen

People Inc.
Chief Business Officer, President Lifestyle Alysia Borsa

People Inc. MPA THE ASSOCIATION OF MAGAZINE MEDIA

Copyright © 2026
Meredith Operations Corporation
225 Liberty Street · New York, NY 10281

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review.

For syndication or international licensing requests, email syndication.generic@people.inc. For reprint and reuse permission, email permissions@people.inc.

Printed in the USA.

Fans crowd around One Direction at New York's Rockefeller Center during a Today *show performance in August 2013.*

Photo Credits

Front cover Anthony Pham/Shutterstock

Back cover (clockwise from top) Anthony Harvey/Shutterstock; Ken McKay/Shutterstock; Nathan Congleton/NBCU Photo Bank/Getty Images

1 Arianna Scolaro/Alamy **2–3** Matt Winkelmeyer/Getty Images **5–6** Anthony Pham/Shutterstock (2) **8** The Image Direct **9** Julian Bajsel/Shutterstock **10–11** Anthony Pham/Shutterstock **12–13** Kevin Winter/Getty Images for The Recording Academy **14–15** Peter Kramer/NBCUniversal/Getty Images **16–17** Kevin Winter/Getty Images for iHeartMedia **18–19** The New York Times/Redux **20–21** Kevin Winter/Getty Images for The Recording Academy **22** Cinzia Camela/LiveMedia/Alamy **23** Dave J. Hogan/Getty Images **24–25** Anthony Pham/Getty Images **26** Isabel Infantes/PA Images/Getty Images **27** Anthony Pham/Getty Images **28–29** Julian Bajsel/Shutterstock **30–31** Anthony Pham/Shutterstock **32** Michael Buckner/Variety/Getty Images **33** Kevin Mazur/Getty Images for HS **34** (from left) Richard Young/Shutterstock; Theo Wargo/WireImage/Getty Images **35** Kevin Mazur/Getty Images for ABA **36** Christopher Polk/Variety/Getty Images **37** Neil Bedford/The Observer/eyevine/Redux **39** (clockwise from top left) Karwai Tang/WireImage/Getty Images; hris Harvey/Alamy; Dave J. Hogan/Getty Images (2); Terence Patrick/CBS/Getty Images; Dave J. Hogan/Getty Images; Christopher Polk/Getty Images for Clear Channel **40–41** Evan Agostini/Invision/AP **43–44** Talkback Thames/Shutterstock (2) **45** Splash News **46–47** ANL/Shutterstock (2) **49** Richard Young/Shutterstock **50–51** (clockwise from top left) Joel Goodman/Guardian/eyevine/Redux; Mcpix Ltd./Shutterstock (2) **52–53** Shutterstock **54** WENN/Alamy **55–57** Ken McKay/Shutterstock (2) **58** Beretta/Sims/Shutterstock **59** Ken McKay/Shutterstock **60** Frank Micelotta/PictureGroup/AP **62–63** Matt Sayles/Invision/AP **65** Charles Sykes/Invision/AP **66–67** GTCRFOTO/Alamy **68** Kevin Mazur/WireImage/Getty Images **69** Dana Edelson/NBCUniversal/Getty Images **70–73** (numerical order) Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images (4); Bettmann/Getty Images; Globe Photos/Shutterstock; Paul Natkin/WireImage/Getty Images; Michel Linssen/Redferns/Getty Images; Aaron Rapoport/Corbis/Getty Images; Mike Prior/Getty Images; Bob Berg/Getty Images; Jonathan Daniel/Allsport/Newsmakers/Getty Images; Nils Jorgensen/Shutterstock; Rob Beccaris/WireImage/Getty Images; Angela Weiss/AFP/Getty Images; Scott Legato/Getty Images; JMEnternational/Getty Images; D. Dipasupil/FilmMagic/Getty Images; Rich Fury/Getty Images for iHeartMedia **74–75** Kevin Mazur/Getty Images for HS **77** Kevin Mazur/Getty Images for Sony Music **78** Kevin Mazur/Getty Images for Casamigos **79** Kevin Mazur/Getty Images for SiriusXM **80** Petko Beier/IMAGO/ZUMA **81** Denise Truscello/Getty Images for iHeartMedia **83** Theo Wargo/Getty Images for HS **84–85** (top) Kevin Mazur/Getty Images for Pandora; (bottom left) Nathan Congleton/NBC/Getty Images **86–87** © Warner Bros. Pictures/Courtesy Everett **88–89** (from left) Warner Bros.; Warner Bros./Moviestore/Shutterstock; Capital Pictures/Alamy **91** Lev Radin/Pacific Press/ZUMA/Alamy **92–94** Anthony Pham/Shutterstock (2) **95** Neilson Barnard/Getty Images **96** Mr. Pics/Shutterstock

A Distinctive Bird

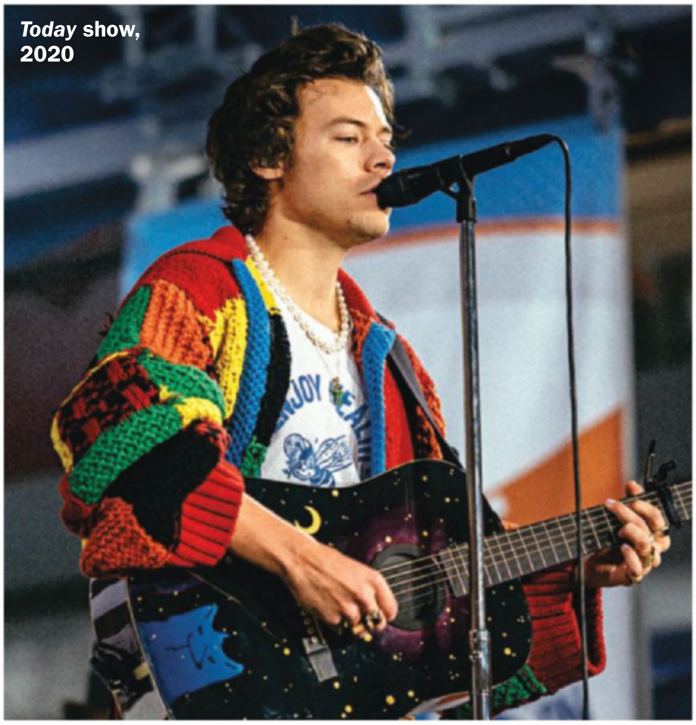
There's no telling how Styles might dress on stage, on the street, or in a video, but it's sure to be entertaining.

Filming the video for "Daylight," from Harry's House, *in 2023.*

BRIT Awards, 2026

HARRY!

From the start, Harry Styles has moved in one direction: up. Today, he's a cultural force—a sensation who's helping shape pop music, reimagine fashion, and invigorate a global fan base. He's doing it all by singing, dancing, and treating people with kindness.



Today show, 2020

One Direction, 2010